Copyrighted Material

PENGUIN CLASSICS

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Montaigne, vol. 8* [1580]

Edition used:

Essays of Montaigne, vol. 8, trans. Charles Cotton, revised by William Carew Hazlett (New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910).

- Author: Michel de Montaigne
- Translator: Charles Cotton
- Editor: William Carew Hazlett

About this title:

Volume 8 of a 10 volume collection of Montaigne's famous essays in the 17th century English translation by Charles Cotton.

Copyright information:

The text is in the public domain.

Fair use statement:

This material is put online to further the educational goals of Liberty Fund, Inc. Unless otherwise stated in the Copyright Information section above, this material may be used freely for educational and academic purposes. It may not be used in any way for profit.

Diana at the Bath. From painting by Jean-Francois Detroy.

THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

AN ESSAY BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

ILLVSTRATED

EDWIN C. HILL

NEW YORK.

EMERSON EDITION

TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES

HAVE BEEN PRINTED

NUMBER 137

Diana at the Bath. From painting by Jean-Francois Detroy.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Diana At The Bath. From Painting by Jean-Francois Detroy . . . . . . Frontispiece
- Wooing. From Painting by F. Andreotti. . . . . Page 46
- Summer. From Painting by II. Makart. . . . . Page 132
- Psyche Beaten With Birches By Order Of Venus. From Painting by Adolphe Weber . . . . . Page 180

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

UPON SOME VERSES OF VIRGIL

BY HOW much profitable thoughts are more full and solid, by so much are they also more cumbersome and heavy: vice, death, poverty, diseases, are grave and grievous subjects. A man should have his soul instructed in the means to sustain and to contend with evils, and in the rules of living and believing well: and often rouse it up, and exercise it in this noble study; but in an ordinary soul it must be by intervals and with moderation; it will otherwise grow besotted if continually intent upon it. I found it necessary, when I was young, to put myself in mind and solicit myself to keep me to my duty; gaiety and health do not, they say, so well agree with those grave and serious meditations: I am at present in another state: the conditions of age but too much put me in mind, urge me to wisdom, and preach to me. From the excess of sprightliness I am fallen into that of severity, which is much more troublesome; and for that reason I now and then suffer myself purposely a little to run into disorder, and occupy my mind in wanton and youthful thoughts, wherewith it diverts itself. I am of late but too reserved, too heavy, and too ripe; years every day read to me lectures of coldness and temperance. This body of mine avoids disorder and dreads it; 'tis now my body's turn to guide my mind towards reformation; it governs, in turn, and more rudely and imperiously than the other; it lets me not an hour alone, sleeping or waking, but is always preaching to me death, patience, and repentance. I now defend myself from temperance, as I have formerly done from pleasure; it draws me too much back, and even to stupidity. Now I will be master of myself, to all intents and purposes; wisdom has its excesses, and has no less need of moderation than folly. Therefore, lest I should wither, dry up, and overcharge myself with prudence, in the intervals and truces my infirmities allow me:—

"That my mind may not eternally be intent upon my ills,"

I gently turn aside, and avert my eyes from the stormy and cloudy sky I have before me, which, thanks be to God, I regard without fear, but not without meditation and study, and amuse myself in the remembrance of my better years:—

"The mind wishes to have what it has lost, and throws itself wholly into memories of the past."

Let childhood look forward and age backward; was not this the signification of Janus' double face? Let years draw me along if they will, but it shall be backward; as long as my eyes can discern the pleasant season expired, I shall now and then turn them that way; though it escape from my blood and veins, I shall not, however, root the image of it out of my memory:—

" 'Tis to live twice to be able to enjoy one's former life again."

Plato ordains that old men should be present at the exercises, dances, and sports of young people, that they may rejoice in others for the activity and beauty of body which is no more in themselves, and call to mind the grace and comeliness of that flourishing age; and wills that in these recreations the honor of the prize should be given to that young man who has most diverted the company. I was formerly wont to mark cloudy and gloomy days as extraordinary; these are now my ordinary days; the extraordinary are the clear and bright; I am ready to leap for joy, as for an unwonted favor, when nothing happens me. Let me tickle myself, I cannot force a poor smile from this wretched body of mine; I am only merry in conceit and in dreaming, by artifice to divert the melancholy of age; but, in faith, it requires another remedy than a dream. A weak contest of art against nature. 'Tis great folly to lengthen and anticipate human incommodities, as every one does; I had rather be a less while old than be old before I am really so. I seize on even the least occasions of pleasure I can meet. I know very well, by hearsay, several sorts of prudent pleasures, effectually so, and glorious to boot; but opinion has not power enough over me to give me an appetite to them. I covet not so much to have them magnanimous, magnificent, and pompous, as I do to have them sweet, facile, and ready:—

"We depart from nature and give ourselves to the people, who understand nothing."

My philosophy is in action, in natural and present practice, very little in fancy: what if I should take pleasure in playing at noisettes (Odd or even?) or at top?—

"He did not sacrifice his health even to rumors."

Pleasure is a quality of very little ambition; it thinks itself rich enough of itself without any addition of repute; and is best pleased where most retired. A young man should be whipped who pretends to a taste in wine and sauces; there was nothing which, at that age, I less valued or knew: now I begin to learn; I am very much ashamed on't; but what should I do? I am

more ashamed and vexed at the occasions that put me upon't. 'Tis for us to dote and trifle away the time, and for young men to stand upon their reputation and nice punctilios; they are going towards the world and the world's opinion; we are retiring from it:—

"Let them reserve to themselves arms, horses, spears, clubs, tennis, swimming, and races; and of many sports leave to us old men cards and dice;"

the laws themselves send us home. I can do no less in favor of this wretched condition into which my age has thrown me than furnish it with toys to play withal, as they do children; and, in truth, we become such. Both wisdom and folly will have enough to do to support and relieve me by alternate services in this calamity of age:—

"Mingle with counsels a brief interval of folly."

I accordingly avoid the lightest punctures; and those that formerly would not have rippled the skin, now pierce me through and through: my habit of body is now so naturally declining to ill:—

"In a fragile body every shock is obnoxious:"

"And the infirm mind can bear no difficult exertion."

I have ever been very susceptibly tender as to offences: I am much more tender now, and open throughout.

"And little force suffices to break what was cracked before."

My judgment restrains me from kicking against and murmuring at the inconveniences that nature orders me to endure, but it does not take away my feeling them: I, who have no other thing in my aim but to live and be merry, would run from one end of the world to the other to seek out one good year of pleasant and jocund tranquillity. A melancholic and dull tranquillity may be enough for me, but it benumbs and stupefies me; I am not contented with it. If there be any person, any knot of good company in country or city, in France or elsewhere, resident or in motion, who can like my humor, and whose humors I can like, let them but whistle and I will run and furnish them with essays in flesh and bone.

Seeing it is the privilege of the mind to rescue itself from old age, I advise mine to it with all the power I have; let it meanwhile continue green, and flourish if it can, like mistletoe upon a dead tree. But I fear 'tis a traitor; it has contracted so strict a fraternity with the body that it leaves me at every turn, to follow that in its need. I wheedle and deal with it apart in vain; I try in vain to wean it from this correspondence, to no effect quote to

it Seneca and Catullus, and ladies and royal masques; if its companion have the stone, it seems to have it too; even the faculties that are most peculiarly and properly its own cannot then perform their functions, but manifestly appear stupefied and asleep; there is no sprightliness in its productions, if there be not at the same time an equal proportion in the body too.

Our masters are to blame, that in searching out the causes of the extraordinary emotions of the soul, besides attributing it to a divine ecstasy, love, martial fierceness, poesy, wine, they have not also attributed a part to health: a boiling, vigorous, full, and lazy health, such as formerly the verdure of youth and security, by fits, supplied me withal; that fire of sprightliness and gaiety darts into the mind flashes that are lively and bright beyond our natural light, and of all enthusiasms the most jovial, if not the most extravagant.

It is, then, no wonder if a contrary state stupefy and clog my spirit, and produce a contrary effect:—

"It rises to no effort; it languishes with the body;"

and yet would have me obliged to it for giving, as it wants to make out, much less consent to this stupidity than is the ordinary case with men of my age. Let us, at least, whilst we have truce, drive away incommodities and difficulties from our commerce:—

"Whilst we can, let us banish old age from the brow."

"Sour things are to be sweetened with those that are pleasant."

I love a gay and civil wisdom, and fly from all sourness and austerity of manners, all repellent mien being suspected by me:—

"The arrogant sadness of a crabbed face."

"And the dull crowd also has its voluptuaries."

I am very much of Plato's opinion, who says that facile or harsh humors are great indications of the good or ill disposition of the mind. Socrates had a constant countenance, but serene and smiling, not sourly austere, like the elder Crassus, whom no one ever saw laugh. Virtue is a pleasant and gay quality.

I know very well that few will quarrel with the license of my writings, who have not more to quarrel with in the license of their own thoughts: I conform myself well enough to their inclinations, but I offend their eyes. 'Tis a fine humor to strain the writings of Plato, to wrest his pretended intercourses with Phaedo, Dion, Stella, and Archeanassa:—

"Let us not be ashamed to speak what we are not ashamed to think."

I hate a froward and dismal spirit, that slips over all the pleasures of life and seizes and feeds upon misfortunes; like flies, that cannot stick to a smooth and polished body, but fix and repose themselves upon craggy and rough places, and like cupping-glasses, that only suck and attract bad blood.

As to the rest, I have enjoined myself to dare to say all that I dare to do; even thoughts that are not to be published, displease me; the worst of my actions and qualities do not appear to me so evil as I find it evil and base not to dare to own them. Every one is wary and discreet in confession, but men ought to be so in action; the boldness of doing ill is in some sort compensated and restrained by the boldness of confessing it. Whoever will oblige himself to tell all, should oblige himself to do nothing that he must be forced to conceal. I wish that this excessive license of mine may draw men to freedom, above these timorous and mincing virtues sprung from our imperfections, and that at the expense of my immoderation I may reduce them to reason. A man must see and study his vice to correct it; they who conceal it from others, commonly conceal it from themselves; and do not think it close enough, if they themselves see it: they withdraw and disguise it from their own consciences:—

"Why does no man confess his vices? because he is yet in them; 'tis for a waking man to tell his dream."

The diseases of the body explain themselves by their increase; we find that to be the gout which we called a rheum or a strain; the diseases of the soul, the greater they are, keep themselves the most obscure; the most sick are the least sensible; therefore it is that with an unrelenting hand they must often, in full day, be taken to task, opened, and torn from the hollow of the heart. As in doing well, so in doing ill, the mere confession is sometimes satisfaction. Is there any deformity in doing amiss, that can excuse us from confessing ourselves? It is so great a pain to me to dissemble, that I evade the trust of another's secrets, wanting the courage to disavow my knowledge. I can keep silent, but deny I cannot without the greatest trouble and violence to myself imaginable: to be very secret, a man must be so by nature, not by obligation. 'Tis little worth, in the service of a prince, to be secret, if a man be not a liar to boot. If he who asked Thales the Milesian whether he ought solemnly to deny that he had committed adultery, had applied himself to me, I should have told him that he ought not to do it; for

I look upon lying as a worse fault than the other. Thales advised him quite contrary, bidding him swear to shield the greater fault by the less: nevertheless, this counsel was not so much an election as a multiplication of vice. Upon which let us say this in passing, that we deal liberally with a man of conscience when we propose to him some difficulty in counterpoise of vice; but when we shut him up betwixt two vices, he is put to a hard choice: as Origen was either to idolatrize or to suffer himself to be carnally abused by a great Ethiopian slave they brought to him. He submitted to the first condition, and wrongly, people say. Yet those women of our times are not much out, according to their error, who protest they had rather burden their consciences with ten men than one mass.

If it be indiscretion so to publish one's errors, yet there is no great danger that it pass into example and custom; for Ariston said, that the winds men most fear are those that lay them open. We must tuck up this ridiculous rag that hides our manners: they send their consciences to the stews, and keep a starched countenance: even traitors and assassins espouse the laws of ceremony, and there fix their duty. So that neither can injustice complain of incivility, nor malice of indiscretion. 'Tis pity but a bad man should be a fool to boot, and that outward decency should palliate his vice: this rough-cast only appertains to a good and sound wall, that deserves to be preserved and whited.

In favor of the Huguenots, who condemn our auricular and private confession, I confess myself in public, religiously and purely: St. Augustin, Origen, and Hippocrates have published the errors of their opinions; I, moreover, of my manners. I am greedy of making myself known, and I care not to how many, provided it be truly; or to say better, I hunger for nothing; but I mortally hate to be mistaken by those who happen to learn my name. He who does all things for honor and glory, what can he think to gain by showing himself to the world in a vizor, and by concealing his true being from the people? Praise a humpback for his stature, he has reason to take it for an affront: if you are a coward, and men commend you for your valor, is it of you they speak? They take you for another. I should like him as well who glorifies himself in the compliments and congees that are made him as if he were master of the company, when he is one of the least of the train. Archelaus, king of Macedon, walking along the street, somebody threw water on his head, which they who were with him said he ought to punish: "Aye, but," said he, "whoever it was, he did not throw the water upon me,

but upon him whom he took me to be." Socrates being told that people spoke ill of him, "Not at all," said he, "there is nothing in me of what they say." For my part, if any one should recommend me as a good pilot, as being very modest or very chaste, I should owe him no thanks; and so, whoever should call me traitor, robber, or drunkard, I should be as little concerned. They who do not rightly know themselves, may feed themselves with false approbations; not I, who see myself, and who examine myself even to my very bowels, and who very well know what is my due. I am content to be less commended, provided I am better known. I may be reputed a wise man in such a sort of wisdom as I take to be folly. I am vexed that my Essays only serve the ladies for a common piece of furniture, and a piece for the hall; this chapter will make me part of the water-closet. I love to traffic with them a little in private; public conversation is without favor and without savor. In farewells, we oftener than not heat our affections towards the things we take leave of; I take my last leave of the pleasures of this world: these are our last embraces.

But let us come to my subject: what has the act of generation, so natural, so necessary, and so just, done to men, to be a thing not to be spoken of without blushing, and to be excluded from all serious and moderate discourse? We boldly pronounce kill, rob, betray, and that we dare only to do betwixt the teeth. Is it to say, the less we expend in words, we may pay so much the more in thinking? For it is certain that the words least in use, most seldom written, and best kept in, are the best and most generally known: no age, no manners, are ignorant of them, no more than the word bread: they imprint themselves in every one without being expressed, without voice, and without figure; and the sex that most practises it is bound to say least of it. 'Tis an act that we have placed in the franchise of silence, from which to take it is a crime even to accuse and judge it; neither dare we reprehend it but by periphrasis and picture. A great favor to a criminal to be so execrable that justice thinks it unjust to touch and see him; free, and safe by the benefit of the severity of his condemnation. Is it not here as in matter of books, that sell better and become more public for being suppressed? For my part, I will take Aristotle at his word, who says, that "bashfulness is an ornament to youth, but a reproach to old age." These verses are preached in the ancient school, a school that I much more adhere to than the modern: its virtues appear to me to be greater, and the vices less: —

"They err as much who too much forbear Venus, as they who are too frequent in her rites."

"Goddess, still thou alone governest nature, nor without thee anything comes into light; nothing is pleasant, nothing joyful."

I know not who could set Pallas and the Muses at variance with Venus, and make them cold towards Love; but I see no deities so well met, or that are more indebted to one another. Who will deprive the Muses of amorous imaginations, will rob them of the best entertainment they have, and of the noblest matter of their work: and who will make Love lose the communication and service of poesy, will disarm him of his best weapons: by this means they charge the god of familiarity and good will, and the protecting goddess of humanity and justice, with the vice of ingratitude and unthankfulness. I have not been so long cashiered from the state and service of this god, that my memory is not still perfect in his force and value:—

"I recognize vestiges of my old flame;"

There are yet some remains of heat and emotion after the fever:—

"Nor let this heat of youth fail me in my winter years."

Withered and drooping as I am, I feel yet some remains of that past ardor:—

- "As Aegean seas, when storms be calmed again,
- That rolled their tumbling waves with troublous blast,
- Do yet of tempests passed some show retain,
- And here and there their swelling billows cast:"

but from what I understand of it, the force and power of this god are more lively and animated in the picture of poesy than in their own essence:—

"Verse has fingers:"

it has I know not what kind of air, more amorous than love itself. Venus is not so beautiful, naked, alive, and panting, as she is here in Virgil:—

"The goddess spoke, and throwing round him her snowy arms in soft embraces, caresses him hesitating. Suddenly he caught the wonted flame, and the well-known warmth pierced his marrow, and ran thrilling through his shaken bones: just as when at times, with thunder, a stream of fire in lightning flashes shoots across the skies. . . . Having

spoken these words, he gave her the wished embrace, and in the bosom of his spouse sought placid sleep."

All that I find fault with in considering it is, that he has represented her a little too passionate for a married Venus; in this discreet kind of coupling, the appetite is not usually so wanton, but more grave and dull. Love hates that people should hold of any but itself, and goes but faintly to work in familiarities derived from any other title, as marriage is: alliance, dowry, therein sway by reason, as much or more than grace and beauty. Men do not marry for themselves, let them say what they will; they marry as much or more for their posterity and family; the custom and interest of marriage concern our race much more than us; and therefore it is, that I like to have a match carried on by a third hand rather than a man's own, and by another man's liking than that of the party himself; and how much is all this opposite to the conventions of love? And also it is a kind of incest to employ in this venerable and sacred alliance the heat and extravagance of amorous license, as I think I have said elsewhere. A man, says Aristotle, must approach his wife with prudence and temperance, lest in dealing too lasciviously with her, the extreme pleasure make her exceed the bounds of reason. What he says upon the account of conscience, the physicians say upon the account of health: "that a pleasure excessively lascivious, voluptuous, and frequent, makes the seed too hot, and hinders conception:" 'tis said, elsewhere, that to a languishing intercourse, as this naturally is, to supply it with a due and fruitful heat, a man must do it but seldom and at appreciable intervals:—

"But let him thirstily snatch the joys of love and enclose them in his bosom."

I see no marriages where the conjugal compatibility sooner fails than those that we contract upon the account of beauty and amorous desires; there should be more solid and constant foundation, and they should proceed with greater circumspection; this furious ardor is worth nothing.

They who think they honor marriage by joining love to it, do, methinks, like those who, to favor virtue, hold that nobility is nothing else but virtue. They are indeed things that have some relation to one another, but there is a great deal of difference; we should not so mix their names and titles; 'tis a wrong to them both so to confound them. Nobility is a brave quality, and with good reason introduced; but forasmuch as 'tis a quality depending upon others, and may happen in a vicious person, in himself

nothing, ’tis in estimate infinitely below virtue: ’tis a virtue, if it be one, that is artificial and apparent, depending upon time and fortune: various in form, according to the country; living and mortal; without birth, as the river Nile; genealogical and common; of succession and similitude; drawn by consequence, and a very weak one. Knowledge, strength, goodness, beauty, riches, and all other qualities, fall into communication and commerce, but this is consummated in itself, and of no use to the service of others. There was proposed to one of our kings the choice of two candidates for the same command, of whom one was a gentleman, the other not; he ordered that, without respect to quality, they should choose him who had the most merit; but where the worth of the competitors should appear to be entirely equal, they should have respect to birth: this was justly to give it its rank. A young man unknown, coming to Antigonus to make suit for his father’s command, a valiant man lately dead: “Friend,” said he, “in such preferments as these, I have not so much regard to the nobility of my soldiers as to their prowess.” And, indeed, it ought not to go as it did with the officers of the kings of Sparta, trumpeters, fiddlers, cooks, the children of whom always succeeded to their places, how ignorant soever, and were preferred before the most experienced in the trade. They of Calicut make of nobles a sort of superhuman persons: they are interdicted marriage and all but warlike employments: they may have of concubines their fill, and the women as many lovers, without being jealous of one another; but ’tis a capital and irremissible crime to couple with a person of meaner condition than themselves; and they think themselves polluted, if they have but touched one in walking along; and supposing their nobility to be marvellously interested and injured in it, kill such as only approach a little too near them: insomuch that the ignoble are obliged to cry out as they walk, like the gondoliers of Venice, at the turnings of streets for fear of jostling; and the nobles command them to step aside to what part they please: by that means these avoid what they repute a perpetual ignominy, those certain death. No time, no favor of the prince, no office, or virtue, or riches, can ever prevail to make a plebeian become noble: to which this custom contributes, that marriages are interdicted betwixt different trades; the daughter of one of the cordwainers’ guild is not permitted to marry a carpenter; and parents are obliged to train up their children precisely in their own callings, and not put them to any other trade; by which means the distinction and continuance of their fortunes are maintained.

A good marriage, if there be any such, rejects the company and conditions of love, and tries to represent those of friendship. ’Tis a sweet society of life, full of constancy, trust, and an infinite number of useful and solid services and mutual obligations; which any woman who has a right taste:—

“Whom the marriage torch has joined with the desired light—”

would be loth to serve her husband in quality of a mistress. If she be lodged in his affection as a wife, she is more honorably and securely placed. When he purports to be in love with another, and works all he can to obtain his desire, let any one but ask him, on which he had rather a disgrace should fall, his wife or his mistress, which of their misfortunes would most afflict him, and to which of them he wishes the most grandeur, the answer to these questions is out of dispute in a sound marriage.

And that so few are observed to be happy, is a token of its price and value. If well formed and rightly taken, ’tis the best of all human societies: we cannot live without it, and yet we do nothing but decry it. It happens, as with cages, the birds without despair to get in, and those within despair of getting out. Socrates being asked, whether it was more commodious to take a wife or not, “Let a man take which course he will,” said he; “he will repent.” ’Tis a contract to which the common saying:—

“Man to man is either a god or a wolf,”

may very fitly be applied; there must be a concurrence of many qualities in the construction. It is found nowadays more convenient for simple and plebeian souls, where delights, curiosity, and idleness does not so much disturb it; but extravagant humors, such as mine, that hate all sorts of obligation and restraint, are not so proper for it:—

“And it is sweet to me to live with a loosened neck.”

Might I have had my own will, I would not have married Wisdom herself, if she would have had me. But ’tis to much purpose to evade it; the common custom and usance of life will have it so. The most of my actions are guided by example, not by choice, and yet I did not go to it of my own voluntary motion; I was led and drawn to it by extrinsic occasions; for not only things that are incommodious in themselves, but also things however ugly, vicious, and to be avoided, may be rendered acceptable by some condition or accident; so unsteady and vain is all human resolution! and I was persuaded to it, when worse prepared and less tractable than I am at present, that I have tried what it is: and as great a libertine as I am taken to

be, I have in truth more strictly observed the laws of marriage, than I either promised or expected. 'Tis in vain to kick, when a man has once put on his fetters: a man must prudently manage his liberty; but having once submitted to obligation, he must confine himself within the laws of common duty, at least, do what he can towards it. They who engage in this contract, with a design to carry themselves in it with hatred and contempt, do an unjust and inconvenient thing; and the fine rule that I hear pass from hand to hand amongst the women, as a sacred oracle:—

"Serve thy husband as thy master, but guard thyself against him as from a traitor,"

which is to say, comport thyself towards him with a dissembled, inimical, and distrustful reverence (a cry of war and defiance), is equally injurious and hard. I am too mild for such rugged designs: to say the truth, I am not arrived to that perfection of ability and refinement of wit, to confound reason with injustice, and to laugh at all rule and order that does not please my palate; because I hate superstition, I do not presently run into the contrary extreme of irreligion. If a man does not always perform his duty, he ought at least to love and acknowledge it; 'tis treachery to marry without espousing.

Let us proceed.

Our poet represents a marriage happy in a good accord wherein nevertheless there is not much loyalty. Does he mean, that it is not impossible but a woman may give the reins to her own passion, and yield to the importunities of love, and yet reserve some duty toward marriage, and that it may be hurt, without being totally broken? A serving man may cheat his master, whom nevertheless he does not hate. Beauty, opportunity, and destiny (for destiny has also a hand in't):—

"There is a fatality about the hidden parts: let nature have endowed you however liberally, 'tis of no use, if your good star fails you in the nick of time;"

have attached her to a stranger; though not so wholly, peradventure, but that she may have some remains of kindness for her husband. They are two designs, that have several paths leading to them, without being confounded with one another; a woman may yield to a man she would by no means have married, not only for the condition of his fortune, but for those also of his person. Few men have made a wife of a mistress, who have not repented it. And even in the other world, what an unhappy life does

Jupiter lead with his, whom he had first enjoyed as a mistress? 'Tis, as the proverb runs, to befoul a basket and then put it upon one's head. I have in my time, in a good family, seen love shamefully and dishonestly cured by marriage: the considerations are widely different. We love at once, without any tie, two things contrary in themselves.

Socrates was wont to say, that the city of Athens pleased, as ladies do whom men court for love; every one loved to come thither to take a turn, and pass away his time; but no one liked it so well as to espouse it, that is, to inhabit there, and to make it his constant residence. I have been vexed to see husbands hate their wives only because they themselves do them wrong; we should not, at all events, methinks, love them the less for our own faults; they should at least, upon the account of repentance and compassion, be dearer to us.

They are different ends, he says, and yet in some sort compatible; marriage has utility, justice, honor, and constancy for its share; a flat, but more universal pleasure: love founds itself wholly upon pleasure, and, indeed, has it more full, lively, and sharp; a pleasure inflamed by difficulty; there must be in it sting and smart: 'tis no longer love, if without darts and fire. The bounty of ladies is too profuse in marriage, and dulls the point of affection and desire: to evade which inconvenience, do but observe what pains Lycurgus and Plato take in their laws.

Women are not to blame at all, when they refuse the rules of life that are introduced into the world, forasmuch as the men made them without their help. There is naturally contention and brawling betwixt them and us; and the strictest friendship we have with them is yet mixed with tumult and tempest. In the opinion of our author, we deal inconsiderately with them in this: after we have discovered that they are, without comparison, more able and ardent in the practice of love than we, and that the old priest testified as much, who had been one while a man, and then a woman:—

"Both aspects of love were known to him:"

and moreover, that we have learned from their own mouths the proof that, in several ages, was made by an Emperor and Empress of Rome, both famous for ability in that affair! for he in one night deflowered ten Sarmatian virgins who were his captives: but she had five-and-twenty bouts in one night, changing her man according to her need and liking:—

"Ardent still, she retired, fatigued, but not satisfied:"

and that upon the dispute which happened in Cataluna, wherein a wife complaining of her husband's too frequent addresses to her, not so much, as I conceive, that she was incommodated by it (for I believe no miracles out of religion) as under this pretence, to curtail and curb in this, which is the fundamental act of marriage, the authority of husbands over their wives, and to show that their frowardness and malignity go beyond the nuptial bed, and spurn under foot even the graces and sweets of Venus; the husband, a man truly brutish and unnatural, replied, that even on fasting days he could not subsist with less than ten courses: whereupon came out that notable sentence of the Queen of Arragon, by which, after mature deliberation of her council, this good queen, to give a rule and example to all succeeding ages of the moderation required in a just marriage, set down six times a day as a legitimate and necessary stint; surrendering and quitting a great deal of the needs and desires of her sex, that she might, she said, establish an easy, and consequently, a permanent and immutable rule. Thereupon the doctors cry out: what must the female appetite and concupiscence be, when their reason, their reformation and virtue, are taxed at such a rate, considering the divers judgments of our appetites? for Solon, master of the law school, taxes us but at three a month, that men may not fail in point of conjugal frequentation: after having, I say, believed and preached all this, we go and enjoin them continency for their particular share, and upon the last and extreme penalties.

There is no passion so hard to contend with as this, which we would have them only resist, not simply as an ordinary vice, but as an execrable abomination, worse than irreligion and parricide; whilst we, at the same time, go to't without offence or reproach. Even those amongst us who have tried the experiment have sufficiently confessed what difficulty, or rather impossibility, they have found by material remedies to subdue, weaken, and cool the body. We, on the contrary, would have them at once sound, vigorous, plump, high-fed, and chaste; that is to say, both hot and cold; for the marriage, which we tell them is to keep them from burning, is but small refreshment to them, as we order the matter. If they take one whose vigorous age is yet boiling, he will be proud to make it known elsewhere:—

> *"Let there be some shame, or we shall go to law: your vigor, bought by your wife with many thousands, is no longer yours: thou hast sold it;"*

Polemon the philosopher was justly by his wife brought before the judge for sowing in a barren field the seed that was due to one that was fruitful: if, on the other hand, they take a decayed fellow, they are in a worse condition in marriage than either maids or widows. We think them well provided for, because they have a man to lie with, as the Romans concluded Clodia Laeta, a vestal nun, violated, because Caligula had approached her, though it was declared he did no more but approach her: but, on the contrary, we by that increase their necessity, forasmuch as the touch and company of any man whatever rouses their desires, that in solitude would be more quiet. And to the end, 'tis likely, that they might render their chastity more meritorious by this circumstance and consideration, Boleslas and Kinge his wife, kings of Poland, vowed it by mutual consent, being in bed together, on their very wedding day, and kept their vow in spite of all matrimonial conveniences.

We train them up from their infancy to the traffic of love; their grace, dressing, knowledge, language, and whole instruction tend that way: their governesses imprint nothing in them but the idea of love, if for nothing else but by continually representing it to them, to give them a distaste for it. My daughter, the only child I have, is now of an age that forward young women are allowed to be married at; she is of a slow, thin, and tender complexion, and has accordingly been brought up by her mother after a retired and particular manner, so that she but now begins to be weaned from her childish simplicity. She was reading before me in a French book where the word fouteau, the name of a tree very well known, occurred; the woman, to whose conduct she is committed, stopped her short a little roughly, and made her skip over that dangerous step. I let her alone, not to trouble their rules, for I never concern myself in that sort of government; feminine polity has a mysterious procedure; we must leave it to them; but if I am not mistaken the commerce of twenty lacquies could not, in six months' time, have so imprinted in her memory the meaning, usage, and all the consequence of the sound of these wicked syllables, as this good old woman did by reprimand and interdiction:—

> *"The maid ripe for marriage delights to learn Ionic dances, and to imitate those lascivious movements. Nay, already from her infancy she meditates criminal amours."*

Let them but give themselves the rein a little, let them but enter into liberty of discourse, we are but children to them in this science. Hear them

but describe our pursuits and conversation, they will very well make you understand that we bring them nothing they have not known before, and digested without our help. Is it, perhaps, as Plato says, that they have formerly been debauched young fellows? I happened one day to be in a place where I could hear some of their talk without suspicion; I am sorry I cannot repeat it. By'rlady, said I, we had need go study the phrases of Amadis, and the tales of Boccaccio and Aretin, to be able to discourse with them: we employ our time to much purpose indeed. There is neither word, example, nor step they are not more perfect in than our books; 'tis a discipline that springs with their blood:—

Wooing. From painting by F. Andreotti.

"Venus herself made them what they are,"

which these good instructors, nature, youth, and health, are continually inspiring them with; they need not learn, they breed it:—

"No milk-white dove, or if there be a thing more lascivious, takes so much delight in kissing as woman, wishful for every man she sees."

So that if the natural violence of their desire were not a little restrained by fear and honor, which were wisely contrived for them, we should be all shamed. All the motions in the world resolve into and tend to this

conjunction; ’tis a matter infused throughout: ’tis a centre to which all things are directed. We yet see the edicts of the old and wise Rome made for the service of love, and the precepts of Socrates for the instruction of courtezans:—

“Quid? quod libelli Stoici inter sericos Jacere pulvillos amant;”

Zeno, amongst his laws, also regulated the motions to be observed in getting a maidenhead. What was the philosopher Strato’s book Of Carnal Conjunction? And what did Theophrastus treat of in those he intituled, the one The Lover, and the other Of Love? Of what Aristippus in his Of Former Delights? What do the so long and lively descriptions in Plato of the loves of his time pretend to? and the book called the Lover, of Demetrius Phalereus? and Clinias, or the Ravished Lover, of Heraclides; and that of Antisthenes, Of Getting Children, or, Of Weddings, and the other, Of the Master or the Lover? And that of Aristo: Of Amorous Exercises? What those of Cleanthes: one, Of Love, the other, Of the Art of Loving? The amorous dialogues of Sphaereus? and the fable of Jupiter and Juno, of Chrysippus, impudent beyond all toleration? And his fifty so lascivious epistles? I will let alone the writings of the philosophers of the Epicurean sect, protectress of voluptuousness. Fifty deities were, in time past, assigned to this office; and there have been nations where, to assuage the lust of those who came to their devotion, they kept men and women in their temples for the worshippers to lie with; and it was an act of ceremony to do this before they went to prayers:—

“Forsooth incontinency is necessary for continency’s sake; a conflagration is extinguished by fire.”

In the greatest part of the world, that member of our body was deified; in the same province, some flayed off the skin to offer and consecrate a piece; others offered and consecrated their seed. In another, the young men publicly cut through betwixt the skin and the flesh of that part in several places, and thrust pieces of wood into the openings as long and thick as they would receive, and of these pieces of wood afterwards made a fire as an offering to their gods; and were reputed neither vigorous nor chaste, if by the force of that cruel pain they seemed to be at all dismayed. Elsewhere the most sacred magistrate was reverenced and acknowledged by that member: and in several ceremonies the effigy of it was carried in pomp to the honor of various divinities. The Egyptian ladies, in their Bacchanalia, each carried one finely carved of wood about their necks, as large and heavy as she

could so carry it; besides which, the statue of their god presented one, which in greatness surpassed all the rest of his body. The married women, near the place where I live, make of their kerchiefs the figure of one upon their foreheads, to glorify themselves in the enjoyment they have of it; and coming to be widows, they throw it behind, and cover it with their headcloths. The most modest matrons of Rome thought it an honor to offer flowers and garlands to the god Priapus; and they made the virgins, at the time of their espousals, sit upon his shameful parts. And I know not whether I have not in my time seen some air of like devotion. What was the meaning of that ridiculous piece of the chaussure of our forefathers, and that is still worn by our Swiss? To what end do we make a show of our implements in figure under our breeches, and often, which is worse, above their natural size, by falsehood and imposture? I have half a mind to believe that this sort of vestment was invented in the better and more conscientious ages, that the world might not be deceived, and that every one should give a public account of his proportions: the simple nations wear them yet, and near about the real size. In those days, the tailor took measure of it, as the shoemaker does now of a man's foot. That good man, who, when I was young, gelded so many noble and ancient statues in his great city, that they might not corrupt the sight of the ladies, according to the advice of this other ancient worthy:—

" 'Tis the beginning of wickedness to expose their persons among the citizens,"

should have called to mind, that, as in the mysteries of the Bona Dea, all masculine appearance was excluded, he did nothing, if he did not geld horses and asses—in short, all nature:—

"So that all living things, men and animals, wild or tame, and fish and gaudy fowl, rush to this flame of love."

The gods, says Plato, have given us one disobedient and unruly member that, like a furious animal, attempts, by the violence of its appetite, to subject all things to it; and so they have given to women one like a greedy and ravenous animal, which, if it be refused food in season, grows wild, impatient of delay, and infusing its rage into their bodies, stops the passages, and hinders respiration, causing a thousand ills, till, having imbibed the fruit of the common thirst, it has plentifully bedewed the bottom of their matrix. Now my legislator should also have considered that, peradventure, it were a chaster and more fruitful usage to let them know the

fact as it is betimes, than permit them to guess according to the liberty and heat of their own fancy; instead of the real parts they substitute, through hope and desire, others that are three times more extravagant; and a certain friend of mine lost himself by producing his in place and time when the opportunity was not present to put them to their more serious use. What mischief do not those pictures of prodigious dimension do that the boys make upon the staircases and galleries of the royal houses? they give the ladies a cruel contempt of our natural furniture. And what do we know but that Plato, after other well-instituted republics, ordered that the men and women, old and young, should expose themselves naked to the view of one another, in his gymnastic exercises, upon that very account? The Indian women who see the men in their natural state, have at least cooled the sense of seeing. And let the women of the kingdom of Pegu say what they will, who below the waist have nothing to cover them but a cloth slit before, and so strait, that what decency and modesty soever they pretend by it, at every step all is to be seen, that it is an invention to allure the men to them, and to divert them from boys, to whom that nation is generally inclined; yet, peradventure they lose more by it than they get, and one may venture to say, that an entire appetite is more sharp than one already half-glutted by the eyes. Livia was wont to say, that to a virtuous woman a naked man was but a statue. The Lacedaemonian women, more virgins when wives than our daughters are, saw every day the young men of their city stripped naked in their exercises, themselves little heeding to cover their thighs in walking, believing themselves, says Plato, sufficently covered by their virtue without any other robe. But those, of whom St. Augustin speaks, have given nudity a wonderful power of temptation, who have made it a doubt, whether women at the day of judgment shall rise again in their own sex, and not rather in ours, for fear of tempting us again in that holy state. In brief, we allure and flesh them by all sorts of ways: we incessantly heat and stir up their imagination, and then we find fault. Let us confess the truth; there is scarce one of us who does not more apprehend the shame that accrues to him by the vices of his wife than by his own, and that is not more solicitous (a wonderful charity) of the conscience of his virtuous wife than of his own; who had not rather commit theft and sacrilege, and that his wife was a murderess and a heretic, than that she should not be more chaste than her husband: an unjust estimate of vices. Both we and they are capable of a thousand corruptions more prejudicial and unnatural than lust: but we

weigh vices, not according to nature, but according to our interest; by which means they take so many unequal forms.

The austerity of our decrees renders the application of women to this vice more violent and vicious than its own condition needs, and engages it in consequences worse than their cause: they will readily offer to go to the law courts to seek for gain, and to the wars to get reputation, rather than in the midst of ease and delights, to have to keep so difficult a guard. Do not they very well see that there is neither merchant nor soldier who will not leave his business to run after this sport, or the porter or cobbler, toiled and tired out as they are with labor and hunger?—

> *"Wouldst thou not exchange all that the wealthy Achaemenes had, or the Mygdonian riches of fertile Phrygia, for one ringlet of Licymnia's hair? or the treasures of the Arabians, when she turns her head to you for fragrant kisses, or with easily assuaged anger denies them, which she would rather by far you took by force, and sometimes herself snatches one?"*

I do not know whether the exploits of Alexander and Caesar really surpass the resolution of a beautiful young woman, bred up after our fashion, in the light and commerce of the world, assailed by so many contrary examples, and yet keeping herself entire in the midst of a thousand continual and powerful solicitations. There is no doing more difficult than that not doing, nor more active: I hold it more easy to carry a suit of armor all the days of one's life than a maidenhead; and the vow of virginity of all others is the most noble, as being the hardest to keep:—

> *"Diaboli virtus in lumbis est,"*

says St. Jerome. We have, doubtless, resigned to the ladies the most difficult and most vigorous of all human endeavors, and let us resign to them the glory too. This ought to encourage them to be obstinate in it; 'tis a brave thing for them to defy us, and to spurn under foot that vain preeminence of valor them; they will find if they do but observe it, that they will not only be much more esteemed for it, but also much more beloved. A gallant man does not give over his pursuit for being refused, provided it be a refusal of chastity, and not of choice; we may swear, threaten, and complain to much purpose; we therein do but lie, for we love them all the better: there is no allurement like modesty, if it be not rude and crabbed. 'Tis stupidity and meanness to be obstinate against hatred and disdain; but against a virtuous and constant resolution, mixed with good-will, 'tis the

exercise of a noble and generous soul. They may acknowledge our service to a certain degree, and give us civilly to understand that they disdain us not; for the law that enjoins them to abominate us because we adore them, and to hate us because we love them, is certainly very cruel, if but for the difficulty of it. Why should they not give ear to our offers and requests, so long as they are kept within the bounds of modesty? wherefore should we fancy them to have other thoughts within, and to be worse than they seem? A queen of our time said with spirit, "that to refuse these courtesies is a testimony of weakness in women and a self-accusation of facility, and that a lady could not boast of her chastity who was never tempted." The limits of honor are not cut so short; they may give themselves a little rein, and relax a little without being faulty: there lies on the frontier some space free, indifferent, and neuter. He that has beaten and pursued her into her fort is a strange fellow if he be not satisfied with his fortune: the price of the conquest is considered by the difficulty. Would you know what impression your service and merit have made in her heart? Judge of it by her behavior. Such a one may grant more, who does not grant so much. The obligation of a benefit wholly relates to the good will of those who confer it: the other coincident circumstances are dumb, dead, and casual; it costs her dearer to grant you that little, than it would do her companion to grant all. If in anything rarity give estimation, it ought especially in this: do not consider how little it is that is given, but how few have it to give; the value of money alters according to the coinage and stamp of the place. Whatever the spite and indiscretion of some may make them say in the excess of their discontent, virtue and truth will in time recover all the advantage. I have known some whose reputation has for a great while suffered under slander, who have afterwards been restored to the world's universal approbation by their mere constancy without care or artifice; every one repents, and gives himself the lie for what he has believed and said; and from girls a little suspected they have been afterward advanced to the first rank amongst the ladies of honor. Somebody told Plato that all the world spoke ill of him. "Let them talk," said he; "I will live so as to make them change their note." Besides the fear of God, and the value of so rare a glory, which ought to make them look to themselves, the corruption of the age we live in compels them to it; and if I were they, there is nothing I would not rather do than intrust my reputation in so dangerous hands. In my time the pleasure of telling (a pleasure little inferior to that of doing) was not permitted but to

those who had some faithful and only friend; but now the ordinary discourse and common table-talk is nothing but boasts of favors received and the secret liberality of ladies. In earnest, ’tis too abject, too much meanness of spirit, in men to suffer such ungrateful, indiscreet, and giddy-headed people so to persecute, forage, and rifle those tender and charming favors.

This our immoderate and illegitimate exasperation against this vice springs from the most vain and turbulent disease that afflicts human minds, which is jealousy:—

“Who says that one light should not be lighted from another light? Let them give ever so much, as much ever remains to lose;”

she, and envy, her sister, seem to me to be the most foolish of the whole troop. As to the last, I can say little about it; ’tis a passion that, though said to be so mighty and powerful, had never to do with me. As to the other, I know it by sight, and that’s all. Beasts feel it; the shepherd Cratis, having fallen in love with a she-goat, the he-goat, out of jealousy, came, as he lay asleep, to butt the head of the female, and crushed it. We have raised this fever to a greater excess by the examples of some barbarous nations; the best disciplined have been touched with it, and ’tis reason, but not transported:—

“Never did adulterer slain by a husband stain with purple blood the Stygian waters.”

Lucullus, Caesar, Pompey, Antony, Cato, and other brave men were cuckolds, and knew it, without making any bustle about it; there was in those days but one coxcomb, Lepidus, that died for grief that his wife had used him so:—

“Wretched man! when, taken in the fact, thou wilt be dragged out of doors by the heels, and suffer the punishment of thy adultery:”

and the god of our poet, when he surprised one of his companions with his wife, satisfied himself by putting them to shame only:—

“And one of the merry gods wishes that he should himself like to be so disgraced:”

and nevertheless took anger at the lukewarm embraces she gave him, complaining that upon that account she was grown jealous of his affection:—

“Dost thou seek causes from above? Why, goddess, has your confidence in me ceased?”

lo! she entreats arms for her bastard:—

"I, a mother, ask armour for a son,"

which are freely granted; and Vulcan speaks honorably of Aeneas:—

"Arms are to be made for a valiant hero,"

with, in truth, a more than human humanity. And I am willing to leave this excess of kindness to the gods:—

"Nor is it fit to compare men with gods."

As to the confusion of children, besides that the gravest legislators ordain and affect it in their republics, it touches not the women, where this passion is, I know not how, much better seated:—

"Often was Juno, greatest of the heaven-dwellers, enraged by her husband's daily infidelities."

When jealousy seizes these poor souls, weak and incapable of resistance, 'tis pity to see how miserably it torments and tyrannizes over them; it insinuates itself into them under the title of friendship, but after it has once possessed them, the same causes that served for a foundation of good-will serve them for a foundation of mortal hatred. 'Tis, of all the diseases of the mind, that which the most things serve for aliment and the fewest for remedy: the virtue, health, merit, reputation of the husband are incendiaries of their fury and ill-will:—

"No enmities are bitter, save that of love."

This fever defaces and corrupts all they have of beautiful and good besides; and there is no action of a jealous woman, let her be how chaste and how good a housewife soever, that does not relish of anger and wrangling; 'tis a furious agitation, that rebounds them to an extremity quite contrary to its cause. This held good with one Octavius at Rome. Having lain with Pontia Posthumia, he augmented love by fruition, and solicited with all importunity to marry her: unable to persuade her, this excessive affection precipitated him to the effects of the most cruel and mortal hatred: he killed her. In like manner, the ordinary symptoms of this other amorous disease are intestine hatreds, private conspiracies, and cabals:—

"And it is known what an angry woman is capable of doing,"

and a rage which so much the more frets itself, as it is compelled to excuse itself by a pretence of good-will.

Now, the duty of chastity is of a vast extent; is it the will that we would have them restrain? This is a very supple and active thing; a thing very nimble, to be stayed. How? if dreams sometimes engage them so far that

they cannot deny them: it is not in them, nor, peradventure, in chastity itself, seeing that is a female, to defend itself from lust and desire. If we are only to trust to their will, what a case are we in, then? Do but imagine what crowding there would be amongst men in pursuance of the privilege to run full speed, without tongue or eyes, into every woman's arms who would accept them. The Scythian women put out the eyes of all their slaves and prisoners of war, that they might have their pleasure of them, and they never the wiser. O, the furious advantage of opportunity! Should any one ask me, what was the first thing to be considered in love matters, I should answer that it was how to take a fitting time; and so the second; and so the third —'tis a point that can do everything. I have sometimes wanted fortune, but I have also sometimes been wanting to myself in matters of attempt. God help him, who yet makes light of this! There is greater temerity required in this age of ours, which our young men excuse under the name of heat; but should women examine it more strictly, they would find that it rather proceeds from contempt. I was always superstitiously afraid of giving offence, and have ever had a great respect for her I loved: besides, he who in this traffic takes away the reverence, defaces at the same time the lustre. I would in this affair have a man a little play the child, the timorous, and the servant. If not altogether in this, I have in other things some air of the foolish bashfulness whereof Plutarch makes mention; and the course of my life has been divers ways hurt and blemished with it; a quality very ill suiting my universal form: and, indeed, what are we but sedition and discrepancy? I am as much out of countenance to be denied as I am to deny; and it so much troubles me to be troublesome to others that on occasions where duty compels me to try the good-will of any one in a thing that is doubtful and that will be chargeable to him, I do it very faintly, and very much against my will: but if it be for my own particular (whatever Homer truly says, that modesty is a foolish virtue in an indigent person), I commonly commit it to a third person to blush for me, and deny those who employ me with the same difficulty: so that it has sometimes befallen me to have had a mind to deny, when I had not the power to do it.

'Tis folly, then, to attempt to bridle in women a desire that is so powerful in them, and so natural to them. And when I hear them brag of having so maidenly and so temperate a will, I laugh at them: they retire too far back. If it be an old toothless trot, or a young dry consumptive thing, though it be not altogether to be believed, at least they may say it with more

similitude of truth. But they who still move and breathe, talk at that ridiculous rate to their own prejudice, by reason that inconsiderate excuses are a kind of self-accusation; like a gentleman, a neighbor of mine, suspected to be insufficient:—

- "Languidior tenera cui pendens sicula beta,
- Numquam se mediam sustulit ad tunicam,"

who three or four days after he was married, to justify himself, went about boldly swearing that he had ridden twenty stages the night before: an oath that was afterwards made use of to convict him of his ignorance in that affair, and to divorce him from his wife. Besides, it signifies nothing, for there is neither continency nor virtue where there are no opposing desires. It is true, they may say, but we will not yield; saints themselves speak after that manner. I mean those who boast in good gravity of their coldness and insensibility, and who expect to be believed with a serious countenance; for when 'tis spoken with an affected look, when their eyes give the lie to their tongue, and when they talk in the cant of their profession, which always goes against the hair, 'tis good sport. I am a great servant of liberty and plainness; but there is no remedy; if it be not wholly simple or childish, 'tis silly, and unbecoming ladies in this commerce, and presently runs into impudence. Their disguises and figures only serve to cozen fools; lying is there in its seat of honor; 'tis a by-way, that by a back-door leads us to truth. If we cannot curb their imagination, what would we have from them. Effects? There are enough of them that evade all foreign communication, by which chastity may be corrupted:—

"He often does that which he does without a witness;"

and those which we fear the least are, peradventure, most to be feared; their sins that make the least noise are the worst:—

"I am less offended with a more absolute strumpet."

There are ways by which they may lose their virginity without prostitution, and, which is more, without their knowledge:—

> *"By malevolence, or unskilfulness, or accident, the midwife, seeking with the hand to test some maiden's virginity, has sometimes destroyed it."*

Such a one, by seeking her maidenhead, has lost it; another by playing with it has destroyed it. We cannot precisely circumscribe the actions, we

interdict them; they must guess at our meaning under general and doubtful terms; the very idea we invent for their chastity is ridiculous: for, amongst the greatest patterns that I have is Fatua, the wife of Faunus: who never, after her marriage, suffered herself to be seen by any man whatever; and the wife of Hiero, who never perceived her husband's stinking breath, imagining that it was common to all men. They must become insensible and invisible to satisfy us.

Now let us confess that the knot of this judgment of duty principally lies in the will; there have been husbands who have suffered cuckoldom, not only without reproach or taking offence at their wives, but with singular obligation to them and great commendation of their virtue. Such a woman has been, who prized her honor above her life, and yet has prostituted it to the furious lust of a mortal enemy, to save her husband's life, and who, in so doing, did that for him she would not have done for herself! This is not the place wherein we are to multiply these examples; they are too high and rich to be set off with so poor a foil as I can give them here; let us reserve them for a nobler place; but for examples of ordinary lustre, do we not every day see women amongst us who surrender themselves for their husbands' sole benefit, and by their express order and mediation? and, of old, Phaulius the Argian, who offered his to King Philip out of ambition; as Galba did it out of civility, who, having entertained Maecenas at supper, and observing that his wife and he began to cast glances at one another and to make eyes and signs, let himself sink down upon his cushion, like one in a profound sleep, to give opportunity to their desires: which he handsomely confessed, for thereupon a servant having made bold to lay hands on the plate upon the table, he frankly cried, "What, you rogue? do you not see that I only sleep for Maecenas?" Such there may be, whose manners may be lewd enough, whose will may be more reformed than another, who outwardly carries herself after a more regular manner. As we see some who complain of having vowed chastity before they knew what they did; and I have also known others really complain of having been given up to debauchery before they were of the years of discretion. The vice of the parents or the impulse of nature, which is a rough counsellor, may be the cause.

In the East Indies, though chastity is of singular reputation, yet custom permitted a married woman to prostitute herself to any one who presented her with an elephant, and that with glory, to have been valued at so high a rate. Phaedo the philosopher, a man of birth, after the taking of his country

Elis, made it his trade to prostitute the beauty of his youth, so long as it lasted, to any one that would, for money thereby to gain his living: and Solon was the first in Greece, 'tis said, who by his laws gave liberty to women, at the expense of their chastity, to provide for the necessities of life; a custom that Herodotus says had been received in many governments before his time. And besides, what fruit is there of this painful solicitude? For what justice soever there is in this passion, we are yet to consider whether it turns to account or no: does any one think to curb them, with all his industry?—

> *"Put on a lock; shut them up under a guard; but who shall guard the guard? she is wary, and begins with them."*

What commodity will not serve their turn, in so knowing an age?

Curiosity is vicious throughout; but 'tis pernicious here. 'Tis folly to examine into a disease for which there is no physic that does not inflame and make it worse; of which the shame grows still greater and more public by jealousy, and of which the revenge more wounds our children than it heals us. You wither and die in the search of so obscure a proof. How miserably have they of my time arrived at that knowledge who have been so unhappy as to have found it out? If the informer does not at the same time apply a remedy and bring relief, 'tis an injurious information, and that better deserves a stab than the lie. We no less laugh at him who takes pains to prevent it, than at him who is cuckold and knows it not. The character of cuckold is indelible: who once has it carries it to his grave; the punishment proclaims it more than the fault. It is to much purpose to drag out of obscurity and doubt our private misfortunes, thence to expose them on tragic scaffolds; and misfortunes that only hurt us by being known, for we say a good wife or a happy marriage, not that they are really so, but because no one says to the contrary. Men should be so discreet as to evade this tormenting and unprofitable knowledge: and the Romans had a custom, when returning from any expedition, to send home before to acquaint their wives with their coming, that they might not surprise them; and to this purpose it is that a certain nation has introduced a custom, that the priest shall on the wedding-day open the way to the bride, to free the husband from the doubt and curiosity of examing in the first assault, whether she comes a virgin to his bed, or damaged by a strange amour.

But the world talks about it. I know a hundred honest men cuckolds, honestly and not unbeseemingly; a worthy man is pitied, not disesteemed

for it. Order it so that your virtue may conquer your misfortune; that good men may curse the occasion, and that he who wrongs you may tremble but to think on't. And, moreover, who escapes being talked of at the same rate, from the least even to the greatest?—

"Who was a man better than thee, base one, in many things."

Seest thou how many honest men are reproached with this in thy presence; believe that thou art no more spared elsewhere. But, the very ladies will be laughing too; and what are they so apt to laugh at in this virtuous age of ours as at a peaceable and well-composed marriage? Each amongst you has made somebody cuckold; and nature runs much in parallel, in compensation, and turn for turn. The frequency of this accident ought long since to have made it more easy; 'tis now passed into custom.

Miserable passion! which has this also, that it is incommunicable:—

"Fortune also refuses ear to our complaints;"

for to what friend dare you intrust your griefs, who, if he does not laugh at them, will not make use of the occasion to get a share of the quarry? The sharps, as well as the sweets of marriage, are kept secret by the wise; and amongst its other troublesome conditions this to a prating fellow, as I am, is one of the chief, that custom has rendered it indecent and prejudicial to communicate to any one all that a man knows and all that a man feels.

To give women the same counsel against jealousy would be so much time lost; their very being is so made up of suspicion, vanity, and curiosity, that to cure them by any legitimate way is not to be hoped. They often recover of this infirmity by a form of health much more to be feared than the disease itself; for as there are enchantments that cannot take away the evil but by throwing it upon another, they also willingly transfer this ever to their husbands, when they shake it off themselves. And yet I know not, to speak truth, whether a man can suffer worse from them than their jealousy; 'tis the most dangerous of all their conditions, as the head is of all their members. Pittacus used to say, that every one had his trouble, and that his was the jealous head of his wife; but for which he should think himself perfectly happy. A mighty inconvenience, sure, which could poison the whole life of so just, so wise, and so valiant a man; what must we other little fellows do? The senate of Marseilles had reason to grant him his request who begged leave to kill himself that he might be delivered from the clamor of his wife; for 'tis a mischief that is never removed but by

removing the whole piece; and that has no remedy but flight or patience, though both of them very hard. He was, methinks, an understanding fellow who said, 'twas a happy marriage betwixt a blind wife and a deaf husband.

Let us also consider whether the great and violent severity of obligation we enjoin them does not produce two effects contrary to our design: namely, whether it does not render the pursuants more eager to attack, and the women more easy to yield. For as to the first, by raising the value of the place, we raise the value and the desire of the conquest. Might it not be Venus herself, who so cunningly enhanced the price of her merchandise, by making the laws her bawds; knowing how insipid a delight it would be that was not heightened by fancy and hardness to achieve? In short, 'tis all swine's flesh, varied by sauces, as Flaminius' host said. Cupid is a roguish god, who makes it his sport to contend with devotion and justice: 'tis his glory that his power mates all powers, and that all other rules give place to his:—

"And seeks out a motive for his misdeed."

As to the second point; should we not be less cuckolds, if we less feared to be so? according to the humor of women whom interdiction incites, and who are more eager, being forbidden:—

"Where thou wilt, they won't; where thou wilt not, they spontaneously agree; they are ashamed to go in the permitted path."

What better interpretation can we make of Messalina's behavior? She, at first, made her husband a cuckold in private, as is the common use; but, bringing her business about with too much ease, by reason of her husband's stupidity, she soon scorned that way, and presently fell to making open love, to own her lovers, and to favor and entertain them in the sight of all: she would make him know and see how she used him. This animal, not to be roused with all this, and rendering her pleasures dull and flat by his too stupid facility, by which he seemed to authorize and make them lawful; what does she? Being the wife of a living and healthful emperor, and at Rome, the theatre of the world, in the face of the sun, and with solemn ceremony, and to Silius, who had long before enjoyed her, she publicly marries herself one day that her husband was gone out of the city. Does it not seem as if she was going to become chaste by her husband's negligence? or that she sought another husband who might sharpen her appetite by his jealousy, and who by watching should incite her? But the first difficulty she met with was also the last: this beast suddenly roused;

these sleepy, sluggish sort of men are often the most dangerous: I have found by experience that this extreme toleration, when it comes to dissolve, produces the most severe revenge; for taking fire on a sudden, anger and fury being combined in one, discharge their utmost force at the first onset: —

"He gives full reins to the fury:"

he put her to death, and with her a great number of those with whom she had intelligence, and even one of them who could not help it, and whom she had caused to be forced to her bed with scourges.

What Virgil says of Venus and Vulcan, Lucretius had better expressed of a stolen enjoyment betwixt her and Mars:—

"Mars, the god of wars, who controls the cruel tasks of war, often reclines on thy bosom, and greedily drinks love at both his eyes, vanquished by the eternal wound of love: and his breath, as he reclines, hangs on thy lips; bending thy head over him as he lies upon thy sacred person, pour forth sweet and persuasive words."

When I ruminate on this rejicit, pascit, inhians, molli, fovet, medullas, labefacta, pendet, percurrit, and that noble circumfusa, mother of the pretty infusus; I disdain those little quibbles and verbal allusions that have since sprung up. Those worthy people stood in need of no subtlety to disguise their meaning; their language is downright, and full of natural and continued vigor; they are all epigram; not only the tail, but the head, body, and feet. There is nothing forced, nothing languishing, but everything keeps the same pace:—

"The whole contexture is manly; they don't occupy themselves with little flowers of rhetoric."

'Tis not a soft eloquence, and without offence only; 'tis nervous and solid, that does not so much please, as it fills and ravishes the greatest minds. When I see these brave forms of expression, so lively, so profound, I do not say that 'tis well said, but well thought. 'Tis the sprightliness of the imagination that swells and elevates the words:—

"The heart makes the man eloquent."

Our people call language, judgment, and fine words, full conceptions. This painting is not so much carried on by dexterity of hand as by having the object more vividly imprinted in the soul. Gallus speaks simply because he conceives simply: Horace does not content himself with a superficial expression; that would betray him; he sees farther and more clearly into

things; his mind breaks into and rummages all the magazine of words and figures wherewith to express himself, and he must have them more than ordinary, because his conception is so. Plutarch says that he sees the Latin tongue by the things: 'tis here the same: the sense illuminates and produces the words, no more words of air, but of flesh and bone; they signify more than they say. Moreover, those who are not well skilled in a language present some image of this; for in Italy I said whatever I had a mind to in common discourse, but in more serious talk, I durst not have trusted myself with an idiom that I could not wind and turn out of its ordinary pace; I would have a power of introducing something of my own.

The handling and utterance of fine wits is that which sets off language; not so much by innovating it, as by putting it to more vigorous and various services, and straining, bending, and adapting it to them. They do not create words, but they enrich their own, and give them weight and signification by the uses they put them to, and teach them unwonted motions, but withal ingeniously and discreetly. And how little this talent is given to all is manifest by the many French scribblers of this age: they are bold and proud enough not to follow the common road, but want of invention and discretion ruins them; there is nothing seen in their writings but a wretched affectation of a strange new style, with cold and absurd disguises, which, instead of elevating, depress the matter: provided they can but trick themselves out with new words, they care not what they signify; and to bring in a new word by the head and shoulders, they leave the old one, very often more sinewy and significant than the other.

There is stuff enough in our language, but there is a defect in cutting out: for there is nothing that might not be made out of our terms of hunting and war, which is a fruitful soil to borrow from; and forms of speaking, like herbs, improve and grow stronger by being transplanted. I find it sufficiently abundant, but not sufficiently pliable and vigorous; it commonly quails under a powerful conception; if you would maintain the dignity of your style, you will often perceive it to flag and languish under you, and there Latin steps in to its relief, as Greek does to others. Of some of these words I have just picked out we do not so easily discern the energy, by reason that the frequent use of them has in some sort abased their beauty, and rendered it common; as in our ordinary language there are many excellent phrases and metaphors to be met with, of which the beauty is withered by age, and the color is sullied by too common handling; but that

nothing lessens the relish to an understanding man, nor does it derogate from the glory of those ancient authors who, ’tis likely, first brought those words into that lustre.

The sciences treat of things too refinedly, after an artificial, very different from the common and natural, way. My page makes love, and understands it; but read to him Leo Hebraeus and Ficinus, where they speak of love, its thoughts and actions, he understands it not. I do not find in Aristotle most of my ordinary motions; they are there covered and disguised in another robe for the use of the schools. God speed them! were I of the trade, I would as much naturalize art as they artificialize nature. Let us let Bembo and Equicola alone.

When I write, I can very well spare both the company and the remembrance of books, lest they should interrupt my progress; and also, in truth, the best authors too much humble and discourage me: I am very much of the painter’s mind, who, having represented cocks most wretchedly ill, charged all his boys not to suffer any natural cock to come into his shop; and had rather need to give myself a little lustre, of the invention of Antigenides the musician, who, when he was asked to sing or play, took care beforehand that the auditory should, either before or after, be satiated with some other ill musicians. But I can hardly be without Plutarch; he is so universal and so full, that upon all occasions, and what extravagant subject soever you take in hand, he will still be at your elbow, and hold out to you a liberal and not to be exhausted hand of riches and embellishments. It vexes me that he is so exposed to be the spoil of those who are conversant with him: I can scarce cast an eye upon him but I purloin either a leg or a wing.

And also for this design of mine ’tis convenient for me to write at home, in a wild country, where I have nobody to assist or relieve me; where I hardly see a man who understands the Latin of his Paternoster, and of French a little less. I might have made it better elsewhere, but then the work would have been less my own; and its principal end and perfection is to be exactly mine. I readily correct an accidental error, of which I am full, as I run carelessly on; but for my ordinary and constant imperfections, it were a kind of treason to put them out. When another tells me, or that I say to myself, “Thou art too thick of figures: this is a word of rough Gascon: that is a dangerous phrase (I do not reject any of those that are used in the common streets of France; they who would fight custom with grammar are triflers); this is an ignorant discourse; this is a paradoxical discourse; that is

going too far: thou makest thyself too merry at times: men will think thou sayest a thing in good earnest which thou only speakest in jest." "Yes, I know, but I correct the faults of inadvertence, not those of custom. Do I not talk at the same rate throughout? Do I not represent myself to the life? 'Tis enough that I have done what I designed; all the world knows me in my book, and my book in me."

Now I have an apish, imitative quality: when I used to write verses (and I never made any but Latin), they evidently discovered the poet I had last read, and some of my first essays have a little exotic taste: I speak something another kind of language at Paris than I do at Montaigne. Whoever I steadfastly look upon easily leaves some impression of his upon me; whatever I consider I usurp, whether a foolish countenance, a disagreeable look, or a ridiculous way of speaking; and vices most of all, because they seize and stick to me, and will not leave hold without shaking. I swear more by imitation than by complexion: a murderous imitation, like that of the apes so terrible both in stature and strength, that Alexander met with in a certain country of the Indies, and which he would have had much ado any other way to have subdued; but they afforded him the means by that inclination of theirs to imitate whatever they saw done; for by that the hunters were taught to put on shoes in their sight, and to tie them fast with many knots, and to muffle up their heads in caps all composed of running nooses, and to seem to anoint their eyes with glue; so did those poor beasts employ their imitation to their own ruin: they glued up their own eyes, haltered and bound themselves. The other faculty of playing the mimic, and ingeniously acting the words and gestures of another, purposely to make people merry, and to raise their admiration, is no more in me than in a stock. When I swear my own oath, 'tis only, By God! of all oaths the most direct. They say that Socrates swore by the dog; Zeno had for his oath the same interjection at this time in use amongst the Italians, Capperi! Pythagoras swore by water and air. I am so apt, without thinking of it, to receive these superficial impressions, that if I have Majesty or Highness in my mouth three days together, they come out instead of Excellency and Lordship eight days after; and what I say to-day in sport and fooling I shall say the same to-morrow seriously. Wherefore, in writing, I more unwillingly undertake beaten arguments, lest I should handle them at another's expense. Every subject is equally fertile to me: a fly will serve the purpose, and 'tis well if this I have in hand has not been undertaken at the

recommendation of as flighty a will. I may begin with that which pleases me best, for the subjects are all linked to one another.

But my soul displeases me, in that it ordinarily produces its deepest and most airy conceits and which please me best, when I least expect or study for them, and which suddenly vanish, having at the instant, nothing to apply them to; on horseback, at table, and in bed: but most on horseback, where I am most given to think. My speaking is a little nicely jealous of silence and attention: if I am talking my best, whoever interrupts me, stops me. In travelling, the necessity of the way will often put a stop to discourse; besides which I, for the most part, travel without company fit for regular discourses, by which means I have all the leisure I would to entertain myself. It falls out as it does in my dreams; whilst dreaming I recommend them to my memory (for I am apt to dream that I dream), but, the next morning, I may represent to myself of what complexion they were, whether gay, or sad, or strange, but what they were, as to the rest, the more I endeavor to retrieve them, the deeper I plunge them in oblivion. So of thoughts that come accidentally into my head, I have no more but a vain image remaining in my memory; only enough to make me torment myself in their quest to no purpose.

Well, then, laying books aside, and more simply and materially speaking, I find, after all, that Love is nothing else but the thirst of enjoying the object desired, or Venus any other thing than the pleasure of discharging one's vessels, just as the pleasure nature gives in discharging other parts, that either by immoderation or indiscretion become vicious. According to Socrates, love is the appetite of generation by the mediation of beauty. And when I consider the ridiculous titillation of this pleasure, the absurd, crack-brained, wild motions with which it inspires Zeno and Cratippus, the indiscreet rage, the countenance inflamed with fury and cruelty in the sweetest effects of love, and then that austere air, so grave, severe, ecstatic, in so wanton an action; that our delights and our excrements are promiscuously shuffled together; and that the supreme pleasure brings along with it, as in pain, fainting and complaining; I believe it to be true, as Plato says, that the gods made man for their sport:—

"What an unkindness there is in jesting!"

and that it was in mockery that nature has ordered the most agitative of actions and the most common, to make us equal, and to put fools and wise men, beasts and us, on a level. Even the most contemplative and prudent

man, when I imagine him in this posture, I hold him an impudent fellow to pretend to be prudent and contemplative; they are the peacocks' feet that abate his pride:—

"What prevents us from speaking truth with a smile?"

They who banish serious imaginations from their sports, do, says one, like him who dares not adore the statue of a saint, if not covered with a veil. We eat and drink, indeed, as beasts do; but these are not actions that obstruct the functions of the soul, in these we maintain our advantage over them; this other action subjects all other thought, and by its imperious authority makes an ass of all Plato's divinity and philosophy; and yet there is no complaint of it. In everything else a man may keep some decorum, all other operations submit to the rules of decency; this cannot so much as in imagination appear other than vicious or ridiculous: find out, if you can, therein any serious and discreet procedure. Alexander said, that he chiefly knew himself to be mortal by this act and sleeping; sleep suffocates and suppresses the faculties of the soul; the familiarity with women likewise dissipates and exhausts them: doubtless 'tis a mark, not only of our original corruption, but also of our vanity and deformity.

On the one side, nature pushes us on to it, having fixed the most noble, useful, and pleasant of all her functions to this desire: and, on the other side, leaves us to accuse and avoid it, as insolent and indecent, to blush at it, and to recommend abstinence. Are we not brutes to call that work brutish which begets us? People of so many differing religions have concurred in several proprieties, as sacrifices, lamps, burning incense, fasts, and offerings; and amongst others, in the condemning this act: all opinions tend that way, besides the widespread custom of circumcision, which may be regarded as a punishment. We have, peradventure, reason to blame ourselves for being guilty of so foolish a production as man, and to call the act, and the parts that are employed in the act, shameful (mine, truly, are now shameful and pitiful). The Essenians, of whom Pliny speaks, kept up their country for several ages without either nurse or baby-clouts, by the arrival of strangers who, following this pretty humor, came continually to them: a whole nation being resolute, rather to hazard a total extermination, than to engage themselves in female embraces, and rather to lose the succession of men, than to beget one. 'Tis said, that Zeno never had to do with a woman but once in his life, and then out of civility, that he might not seem too obstinately to disdain the sex. Every one avoids seeing a man born, every

one runs to see him die; to destroy him a spacious field is sought out in the face of the sun, but, to make him, we creep into as dark and private a corner as we can: 'tis a man's duty to withdraw himself bashfully from the light to create; but 'tis glory and the fountain of many virtues to know how to destroy what we have made: the one is injury, the other favor: for Aristotle says that to do any one a kindness, in a certain phrase of his country, is to kill him. The Athenians, to couple the disgrace of these two actions, having to purge the Isle of Delos, and to justify themselves to Apollo, interdicted at once all births and burials in the precincts thereof:—

"We are ashamed of ourselves."

There are some nations that will not be seen to eat. I know a lady, and of the best quality, who has the same opinion, that chewing disfigures the face, and takes away much from the ladies' grace and beauty; and therefore unwillingly appears at a public table with an appetite; and I know a man also, who cannot endure to see another eat, nor himself to be seen eating, and who is more shy of company when putting in than when putting out. In the Turkish empire, there are a great number of men who, to excel others, never suffer themselves to be seen when they make their repast: who never have any more than one a week; who cut and mangle their faces and limbs; who never speak to any one: fanatic people who think to honor their nature by disnaturing themselves; who value themselves upon their contempt of themselves, and purport to grow better by being worse. What monstrous animal is this, that is a horror to himself, to whom his delights are grievous, and who weds himself to misfortune? There are people who conceal their life:—

"And change for exile their homes and pleasant abodes,"

and withdraw them from the sight of other men; who avoid health and cheerfulness, as dangerous and prejudicial qualities. Not only many sects, but many peoples, curse their birth, and bless their death; and there is a place where the sun is abominated and darkness adored. We are only ingenious in using ourselves ill: 'tis the real quarry our intellects fly at; and intellect, when misapplied, is a dangerous tool!—

"O wretched men, whose pleasures are a crime!"

Alas, poor man! thou hast enough inconveniences that are inevitable, without increasing them by thine own invention; and art miserable enough by nature, without being so by art; thou hast real and essential deformities enough, without forging those that are imaginary. Dost thou think thou art

too much at ease unless half thy ease is uneasy? dost thou find that thou hast not performed all the necessary offices that nature has enjoined thee, and that she is idle in thee, if thou dost not oblige thyself to other and new offices? Thou dost not stick to infringe her universal and undoubted laws; but stickest to thy own special and fantastic rules, and by how much more particular, uncertain, and contradictory they are, by so much thou employest thy whole endeavor in them: the laws of thy parish occupy and bind thee: those of God and the world concern thee not. Run but a little over the examples of this kind; thy life is full of them.

Whilst the verses of these two poets treat so reservedly and discreetly of wantonness as they do, methinks they discover it much more openly. Ladies cover their necks with network, priests cover several sacred things, and painters shadow their pictures to give them greater lustre: and ’tis said that the sun and wind strike more violently by reflection than in a direct line. The Egyptian wisely answered him who asked him what he had under his cloak, “It is hid under my cloak,” said he, “that thou mayest not know what it is:” but there are certain other things that people hide only to show them. Hear that one, who is more open:—

“And pressed her naked body to mine:”

methinks that he emasculates me. Let Martial turn up Venus as high as he may, he cannot show her so naked: he who says all that is to be said gluts and disgusts us. He who is afraid to express himself, draws us on to guess at more than is meant; there is treachery in this sort of modesty, and specially when they half open, as these do, so fair a path to imagination. Both the action and description should relish of theft.

The more respectful, more timorous, more coy, and secret love of the Spaniards and Italians pleases me. I know not who of old wished his throat as long as that of a crane, that he might the longer taste what he swallowed; it had been better wished as to this quick and precipitous pleasure, especially in such natures as mine that have the fault of being too prompt. To stay its flight and delay it with preambles: all things—a glance, a bow, a word, a sign, stand for favor and recompense betwixt them. Were it not an excellent piece of thrift in him who could dine on the steam of the roast? ’Tis a passion that mixes with very little solid essence, far more vanity and feverish raving; and we should serve and pay it accordingly. Let us teach the ladies to set a better value and esteem upon themselves, to amuse and fool us: we give the last charge at the first onset; the French impetuosity

will still show itself; by spinning out their favors, and exposing them in small parcels, even miserable old age itself will find some little share of reward, according to its worth and merit. He who has no fruition but in fruition, who wins nothing unless he sweeps the stakes, who takes no pleasure in the chase but in the quarry, ought not to introduce himself in our school: the more steps and degrees there are, so much higher and more honorable is the uppermost seat: we should take a pleasure in being conducted to it, as in magnificent palaces, by various porticoes and passages, long and pleasant galleries, and many windings. This disposition of things would turn to our advantage; we should there longer stay and longer love; without hope and without desire we proceed not worth a pin. Our conquest and entire possession is what they ought infinitely to dread: when they wholly surrender themselves up to the mercy of our fidelity and constancy they run a mighty hazard; they are virtues very rare and hard to be found; the ladies are no sooner ours, than we are no more theirs:—

"When our desires are once satisfied, we care little for oaths and promises;"

And Thrasonides, a young man of Greece, was so in love with his passion that, having gained a mistress's consent, he refused to enjoy her, that he might not by fruition quench and stupefy the unquiet ardor of which he was so proud, and with which he so fed himself. Dearness is a good sauce to meat: do but observe how much the manner of salutation, particular to our nation, has, by its facilities, made kisses, which Socrates says are so powerful and dangerous for the stealing of hearts, of no esteem. It is a displeasing custom and injurious for the ladies, that they must be obliged to lend their lips to every fellow who has three footmen at his heels, however ill-favored he may be in himself:—

- "Cujus livida naribus caninis
- Dependet glacies, rigetque barba . . .
- Centum occurrere malo culilingis:"

and we ourselves barely gain by it; for as the world is divided, for three beautiful women we must kiss fifty ugly ones; and to a tender stomach, like those of my age, an ill kiss overpays a good one.

In Italy they passionately court even their common women who sell themselves for money, and justify the doing so by saying, "that there are

degrees of fruition, and that by such service they would procure for themselves that which is most entire; the women sell nothing but their bodies; the will is too free and too much of its own to be exposed to sale." So that these say, 'tis the will they undertake and they have reason. 'Tis indeed the will that we are to serve and gain by wooing. I abhor to imagine mine, a body without affection: and this madness is, methinks, cousin-german to that of the boy who would needs pollute the beautiful statue of Venus made by Praxiteles; or that of the furious Egyptian, who violated the dead carcass of a woman he was embalming: which was the occasion of the law then made in Egypt, that the corpses of beautiful young women, of those of good quality, should be kept three days before they should be delivered to those whose office it was to take care for the interment. Periander did more wonderfully, who extended his conjugal affection (more regular and legitimate) to the enjoyment of his wife Melissa after she was dead. Does it not seem a lunatic humor in the Moon, seeing she could no otherwise enjoy her darling Endymion, to lay him for several months asleep, and to please herself with the fruition of a boy who stirred not but in his sleep? I likewise say that we love a body without a soul or sentiment when we love a body without its consent and desire. All enjoyments are not alike: there are some that are hectic and languishing: a thousand other causes besides good-will may procure us this favor from the ladies; this is not a sufficient testimony of affection: treachery may lurk there, as well as elsewhere: they sometimes go to't by halves:—

"As if they are preparing frankincense and wine . . . you might think her absent or marble:"

I know some who had rather lend that than their coach, and who only impart themselves that way. You are to examine whether your company pleases them upon any other account, or, as some strong-chined groom, for that only; in what degree of favor and esteem you are with them:—

"Wherefore that is enough, if that day alone is given us which she marks with a whiter stone."

What if they eat your bread with the sauce of a more pleasing imagination?

"She has you in her arms; her thoughts are with other absent lovers."

What? have we not seen one in these days of ours who made use of this act for the purpose of a most horrid revenge, by that means to kill and

poison, as he did, a worthy lady?

Such as know Italy will not think it strange if, for this subject, I seek not elsewhere for examples; for that nation may be called the regent of the world in this. They have more generally handsome and fewer ugly women than we; but for rare and excellent beauties we have as many as they. I think the same of their intellects: of those of the common sort, they have evidently far more: brutishness is immeasurably rarer there; but in individual characters of the highest form, we are nothing indebted to them. If I should carry on the comparison, I might say, as touching valor, that, on the contrary, it is, to what it is with them, common and natural with us; but sometimes we see them possessed of it to such a degree as surpasses the greatest examples we can produce. The marriages of that country are defective in this; their custom commonly imposes so rude and so slavish a law upon the women, that the most distant acquaintance with a stranger is as capital an offence as the most intimate; so that all approaches being rendered necessarily substantial, and seeing that all comes to one account, they have no hard choice to make; and when they have broken down the fence, we may safely presume they get on fire:—

> *"Lust, like a wild beast, being more excited by being bound, breaks from his chains with greater wildness:"*

They must give them a little more rein:—

> *"I saw, the other day, a horse struggling against his bit, rush like a thunderbolt:"*

the desire of company is allayed by giving it a little liberty. We are pretty much in the same case: they are extreme in constraint, we in license. 'Tis a good custom we have in France that our sons are received into the best families, there to be entertained and bred up pages, as in a school of nobility; and 'tis looked upon as a discourtesy and an affront to refuse this to a gentleman. I have taken notice (for, so many families, so many differing forms) that the ladies who have been strictest with their maids have had no better luck than those who allowed them a greater liberty. There should be moderation in these things; one must leave a great deal of their conduct to their own discretion; for, when all comes to all, no discipline can curb them throughout. But it is true withal that she who comes off with flying colors from a school of liberty, brings with her whereon to repose more confidence than she who comes away sound from a severe and strict school.

Our fathers dressed up their daughters' looks in bashfulness and fear (their courage and desires being the same); we ours in confidence and assurance; we understand nothing of the matter; we must leave it to the Sarmatian women, who may not lie with a man till with their own hands they have first killed another in battle. For me, who have no other title left me to these things but by the ears, 'tis sufficient if, according to the privilege of my age, they retain me for one of their counsel. I advise them then, and us men too, to abstinence; but if the age we live in will not endure it, at least modesty and discretion. For, as in the story of Aristippus, who, speaking to some young men who blushed to see him go into a scandalous house, said: "the vice is in not coming out, not in going in," let her who has no care of her conscience have yet some regard to her reputation; and though she be rotten within, let her carry a fair outside at least.

I commend a gradation and delay in bestowing their favors: Plato declares that, in all sorts of love, facility and promptness are forbidden to the defendant. 'Tis a sign of eagerness which they ought to disguise with all the art they have, so rashly, wholly, and hand-over-hand to surrender themselves. In carrying themselves orderly and measuredly in the granting their last favors, they much more allure our desires and hide their own. Let them still fly before us, even those who have most mind to be overtaken: they better conquer us by flying, as the Scythians did. To say the truth, according to the law that nature has imposed upon them, it is not proper for them either to will or desire; their part is to suffer, obey, and consent: and for this it is that nature has given them a perpetual capacity, which in us is but at times and uncertain; they are always fit for the encounter, that they may be always ready when we are so:—

"Born to suffer."

And whereas she has ordered that our appetites shall be manifest by a prominent demonstration, she would have theirs to be hidden and concealed within, and has furnished them with parts improper for ostentation, and simply defensive. Such proceedings as this that follows must be left to the Amazonian license: Alexander marching his army through Hyrcania, Thalestris, Queen of the Amazons, came with three hundred light horse of her own sex, well mounted and armed, having left the remainder of a very great army that followed her behind the neighboring mountains to give him a visit; where she publicly and in plain terms told him that the fame of his valor and victories had brought her thither to see him, and to make him an

offer of her forces to assist him in the pursuit of his enterprises; and that, finding him so handsome, young, and vigorous, she, who was also perfect in all those qualities, advised that they might lie together, to the end that from the most valiant woman of the world and the bravest man then living, there might spring some great and wonderful issue for the time to come. Alexander returned her thanks for all the rest; but, to give leisure for the accomplishment of her last demand, he detained her thirteen days in that place, which were spent in royal feasting and jollity, for the welcome of so courageous a princess.

We are, almost throughout, unjust judges of their actions, as they are of ours. I confess the truth when it makes against me, as well as when ’tis on my side. ’Tis an abominable intemperance that pushes them on so often to change, and that will not let them limit their affection to any one person whatever; as is evident in that goddess to whom are attributed so many changes and so many lovers. But ’tis true withal that ’tis contrary to the nature of love if it be not violent; and contrary to the nature of violence if it be constant. And they who wonder, exclaim, and keep such a clutter to find out the causes of this frailty of theirs, as unnatural and not to be believed, how comes it to pass they do not discern how often they are themselves guilty of the same, without any astonishment or miracle at all? It would, peradventure, be more strange to see the passion fixed; ’tis not a simply corporeal passion; if there be no end to avarice and ambition, there is doubtless no more in desire; it still lives after satiety; and ’tis impossible to prescribe either constant satisfaction or end; it ever goes beyond its possession. And by that means inconstancy, peradventure, is in some sort more pardonable in them than in us: they may plead, as well as we, the inclination to variety and novelty common to us both; and secondly, without us, that they buy a cat in a sack: Joanna, queen of Naples, caused her first husband, Andreas, to be hanged at the bars of her window in a halter of gold and silk woven with her own hand, because in matrimonial performances she neither found his parts nor abilities answer the expectation she had conceived from his stature, beauty, youth, and activity, by which she had been caught and deceived. They may say there is more pains required in doing than in suffering; and so they are on their part always at least provided for necessity, whereas on our part it may fall out otherwise. For this reason it was that Plato wisely made a law that before marriage, to determine of the fitness of persons, the judges should see the young men

who pretended to it stripped stark naked, and the women but to the girdle only. When they come to try us they do not, perhaps, find us worthy of their choice:—

"After using every endeavor to arouse him to action, she quits the barren couch."

'Tis not enough that a man's will be good; weakness and insufficiency lawfully break a marriage:—

"And seeks a more vigorous lover to undo her virgin zone:"

why not? and according to her own standard, an amorous intelligence, more licentious and active:—

"If his strength be unequal to the pleasant task."

But is it not great impudence to offer our imperfections and imbecilities, where we desire to please and leave a good opinion and esteem of ourselves? For the little that I am able to do now:—

"Fit but for once."

I would not trouble a woman, that I am to reverence and fear:—

"Fear not him whose eleventh lustrum is closed."

Nature should satisfy herself in having rendered this age miserable, without rendering it ridiculous too. I hate to see it, for one poor inch of pitiful vigor which comes upon it but thrice a week, to strut and put itself in battle-array with as much eagerness as if there were in the belly a great and legitimate day's work; a true flame of flax. And I wonder to see it so lively and throbbing and then in a moment so congealed and extinguished. This appetite ought to appertain only to the flower of beautiful youth: trust not to its seconding that indefatigable, full, constant, magnanimous ardor you think in you, for it will certainly leave you in a pretty corner; but rather transfer it to some tender, bashful, and ignorant boy, who yet trembles at the rod, and blushes:—

"As Indian ivory streaked with crimson, or white lilies mixed with the damask rose."

Who can stay till the morning without dying for shame to behold the disdain of the fair eyes of her who knows so well his fumbling impertinence:—

"Though she nothing say, her looks betray her anger,"

has never had the satisfaction and the glory of having cudgelled them till they were weary, with the vigorous performance of one heroic night. When I have observed any one to be vexed with me, I have not presently

accused her levity, but have been in doubt, if I had not reason rather to complain of nature; she has doubtless used me very uncivilly and unkindly: —

- “Si non longa satis, si non bene mentula crassa:
- Nimirum sapiunt, videntque parvam
- Matronae quoque mentulam illibenter:”

and done me a most enormous injury. Every member I have, as much one as another, is equally my own, and no other more properly makes me a man than this.

I universally owe my entire picture to the public. The wisdom of my instruction consists in liberty, in truth, in essence: disdaining to introduce those little, feigned, common, and provincial rules into the catalogue of its real duties; all natural, general, and constant, of which civility and ceremony are daughters indeed, but illegitimate. We are sure to have the vices of appearance, when we shall have had those of essence: when we have done with these, we run full drive upon the others, if we find it must be so; for there is danger that we shall fancy new offices, to excuse our negligence towards the natural ones, and to confound them: and to manifest this, is it not seen that in places where faults are crimes, crimes are but faults; that in nations where the laws of decency are most rare and most remiss, the primitive laws of common reason are better observed: the innumerable multitude of so many duties stifling and dissipating our care. The application of ourselves to light and trivial things diverts us from those that are necessary and just. Oh, how these superficial men take an easy and plausible way in comparison of ours! These are shadows wherewith we palliate and pay one another; but we do not pay, but inflame the reckoning towards that great Judge, who tucks up our rags and tatters above our shameful parts, and stickles not to view us all over, even to our inmost and most secret ordures: it were a useful decency of our maidenly modesty, could it keep him from this discovery. In fine, whoever could reclaim man from so scrupulous a verbal superstition, would do the world no great disservice. Our life is divided betwixt folly and prudence: whoever will write of it but what is reverend and canonical, will leave above the one-half behind. I do not excuse myself to myself; and if I did, it should rather be for my excuses that I would excuse myself than for any other fault; I excuse

myself of certain humors, which I think more strong in number than those that are on my side. In consideration of which, I will further say this (for I desire to please every one, though it will be hard to do):—

"For a man to conform to such a variety of manners, discourses, and wills,"

that they ought not to condemn me for what I make authorities, received and approved by so many ages, to utter: and that there is no reason that for want of rhyme they should refuse me the liberty they allow even to churchmen of our nation and time, and these amongst the most notable, of which here are two of their brisk verses:—

- "Rimula, dispeream, ni monogramma tua est."
- "Unvit d'amy la contente et bien traicte:"

besides how many others. I love modesty; and 'tis not out of judgment that I have chosen this scandalous way of speaking; 'tis nature that has chosen it for me. I commend it not, no more than other forms that are contrary to common use: but I excuse it, and by circumstances both general and particular, alleviate its accusation.

But to proceed. Whence, too, can proceed that usurpation of sovereign authority you take upon you over the women, who favor you at their own expense:—

"If, in the stealthy night, she has made strange gifts,"

so that you presently assume the interest, coldness, and authority of a husband? 'Tis a free contract: why do you not then keep to it, as you would have them do? there is no prescription upon voluntary things. 'Tis against the form, but it is true withal, that I in my time have conducted this bargain as much as the nature of it would permit, as conscientiously and with as much color of justice, as any other contract; and that I never pretended other affection than what I really had, and have truly acquainted them with its birth, vigor, and declination, its fits and intermissions: a man does not always hold on at the same rate. I have been so sparing of my promises, that I think I have been better than my word. They have found me faithful even to service of their inconstancy, a confessed and sometimes multiplied inconstancy. I never broke with them, whilst I had any hold at all, and what occasion soever they have given me, never broke with them to hatred or contempt; for such privacies, though obtained upon never so scandalous

terms, do yet oblige to some good will. I have sometimes, upon their tricks and evasions, discovered a little indiscreet anger and impatience; for I am naturally subject to rash emotions, which, though light and short, often spoil my market. At any time they have consulted my judgment, I never stuck to give them sharp and paternal counsels, and to pinch them to the quick. If I have left them any cause to complain of me, 'tis rather to have found in me, in comparison of the modern use, a love foolishly conscientious than anything else. I have kept my word in things wherein I might easily have been dispensed; they sometimes surrendered themselves with reputation, and upon articles that they were willing enough should be broken by the conqueror. I have, more than once, made pleasure in its greatest effort strike to the interest of their honor; and where reason importuned me, have armed them against myself; so that they ordered themselves more decorously and securely by my rules, when they frankly referred themselves to them, than they would have done by their own. I have ever, as much as I could, wholly taken upon myself alone the hazard of our assignations, to acquit them; and have always contrived our meetings after the hardest and most unusual manner, as less suspected, and, moreover, in my opinion, more accessible. They are chiefly more open, where they think they are most securely shut; things least feared are least interdicted and observed; one may more boldly dare what nobody thinks you dare, which by its difficulty becomes easy. Never had any man his approaches more impertinently generative; this way of loving is more according to discipline: but how ridiculous it is to our people, and how ineffectual, who better knows than I? yet I shall not repent me of it; I have nothing there more to lose:—

"The holy wall, by my votive table, shows that I have hanged up my wet clothes in honor of the powerful god of the sea:"

'tis now time to speak out. But as I might, peradventure, say to another, "Thou talkest idly, my friend; the love of thy time has little commerce with faith and integrity:"—

"If you seek to make these things certain by reason, you will do no more than if you should seek to be mad in your senses:"

on the contrary, also, if it were for me to begin again, certainly it should be by the same method and the same progress, how fruitless soever it might be to me; folly and insufficiency are commendable in an incommendable action: the farther I go from their humor in this, I approach so much nearer to my own. As to the rest, in this traffic, I did not suffer

myself to be totally carried away; I pleased myself in it, but did not forget myself: I retained the little sense and discretion that nature has given me, entire for their service and my own: a little emotion, but no dotage. My conscience, also, was engaged in it, even to debauch and licentiousness; but, as to ingratitude, treachery, malice, and cruelty, never. I would not purchase the pleasure of this vice at any price, but content myself with its proper and simple cost:—

"Nothing is a vice in itself."

I almost equally hate a stupid and slothful laziness, as I do a toilsome and painful employment; this pinches, the other lays me asleep. I like wounds as well as bruises, and cuts as well as dry blows. I found in this commerce, when I was the most able for it, a just moderation betwixt these extremes. Love is a sprightly, lively, and gay agitation; I was neither troubled nor afflicted with it, but heated, and moreover, disordered; a man must stop there; it hurts nobody but fools. A young man asked the philosopher Panetius if it were becoming a wise man to be in love? "Let the wise man look to that," answered he, "but let not thou and I, who are not so, engage ourselves in so stirring and violent an affair, that enslaves us to others, and renders us contemptible to ourselves." He said true that we are not to intrust a thing so precipitous in itself to a soul that has not wherewithal to withstand its assaults and disprove practically the saying of Agesilaus, that prudence and love cannot live together. 'Tis a vain employment, 'tis true, unbecoming, shameful, and illegitimate; but carried on after this manner, I look upon it as wholesome, and proper to enliven a drowsy soul and to rouse up a heavy body; and, as an experienced physician, I would prescribe it to a man of my form and condition, as soon as any other recipe whatever, to rouse and keep him in vigor till well advanced in years, and to defer the approaches of age. Whilst we are but in the suburbs, and that the pulse yet beats:—

> *"Whilst the white hair is new, whilst old age is still straight-shouldered, whilst there still remains something for Lachesis to spin, whilst I walk on my own legs, and need no staff to lean upon,"*

we have need to be solicited and tickled by some such nipping incitation as this. Do but observe what youth, vigor, and gaiety it inspired the good Anacreon withal: and Socrates, who was then older than I, speaking of an amorous object: "Leaning," said he, "my shoulder to her shoulder, and my head to hers, as we were reading together in a book, I felt,

without dissembling, a sudden sting in my shoulder like the biting of an insect, which I still felt above five days after, and a continual itching crept into my heart." So that merely the accidental touch, and of a shoulder, heated and altered a soul cooled and enerved by age, and the strictest liver of all mankind. And, pray, why not? Socrates was a man, and would neither be, nor seem, any other thing. Philosophy does not contend against natural pleasures, provided they be moderate, and only preaches moderation, not a total abstinence; the power of its resistance is employed against those that are adulterate and strange. Philosophy says that the appetites of the body ought not to be augmented by the mind, and ingeniously warns us not to stir up hunger by saturity; not to stuff, instead of merely filling, the belly; to avoid all enjoyments that may bring us to want; and all meats and drinks that bring thirst and hunger: as, in the service of love, she prescribes us to take such an object as may simply satisfy the body's need, and does not stir the soul, which ought only barely to follow and assist the body, without mixing in the affair. But have I not reason to hold that these precepts, which, indeed, in my opinion, are somewhat over strict, only concern a body in its best plight; and that in a body broken with age, as in a weak stomach, 'tis excusable to warm and support it by art, and by the mediation of the fancy to restore the appetite and cheerfulness it has lost of itself.

May we not say that there is nothing in us, during this earthly prison, that is purely either corporeal or spiritual; and that we injuriously break up a man alive; and that it seems but reasonable that we should carry ourselves as favorably, at least, towards the use of pleasure as we do towards that of pain! Pain was (for example) vehement even to perfection in the souls of the saints by penitence: the body had there naturally a share by the right of union, and yet might have but little part in the cause; and yet are they not contented that it should barely follow and assist the afflicted soul: they have afflicted itself with grievous and special torments, to the end that by emulation of one another the soul and body might plunge man into misery by so much more salutiferous as it is more severe. In like manner, is it not injustice, in bodily pleasures, to subdue and keep under the soul, and say that it must therein be dragged along as to some enforced and servile obligation and necessity? 'Tis rather her part to hatch and cherish them, there to present herself, and to invite them, the authority of ruling belonging to her; as it is also her part, in my opinion, in pleasures that are proper to her, to inspire and infuse into the body all the sentiment it is capable of, and

to study how to make them sweet and useful to it. For it is good reason, as they say, that the body should not pursue its appetites to the prejudice of the mind; but why is it not also the reason that the mind should not pursue hers to the prejudice of the body?

I have no other passion to keep me in breath. What avarice, ambition, quarrels, lawsuits do for others who, like me, have no particular vocation, love would much more commodiously do; it would restore to me vigilance, sobriety, grace, and the care of my person; it would reassure my countenance, so that the grimaces of old age, those deformed and dismal looks, might not come to disgrace it; would again put me upon sound and wise studies, by which I might render myself more loved and esteemed, clearing my mind of the despair of itself and of its use, and redintegrating it to itself; would divert me from a thousand troublesome thoughts, a thousand melancholic humors that idleness and the ill posture of our health loads us withal at such an age; would warm again, in dreams at least, the blood that nature is abandoning; would hold up the chin, and a little stretch out the nerves, the vigor and gaiety of life of that poor man who is going full drive towards his ruin. But I very well understand that it is a commodity hard to recover: by weakness and long experience our taste is become more delicate and nice; we ask most when we bring least, and are harder to choose when we least deserve to be accepted; and knowing ourselves for what we are, we are less confident and more distrustful; nothing can assure us of being beloved, considering our condition and theirs. I am out of countenance to see myself in company with those young wanton creatures: —

> *"In whose unbridled reins the vigor is more inherent than in the young tree on the hills."*

To what end should we go insinuate our misery amid their gay and sprightly humor?—

> *"As the fervid youths may behold, not without laughter, a burning torch worn to ashes."*

They have strength and reason on their side; let us give way; we have nothing to do there: and these blossoms of springing beauty suffer not themselves to be handled by such benumbed hands nor dealt with by mere material means, for, as the old philosopher answered one who jeered him because he could not gain the favor of a young girl he made love to: "Friend, the hook will not stick in such soft cheese." It is a commerce that

requires relation and correspondence: the other pleasures we receive may be acknowledged by recompenses of another nature, but this is not to be paid but with the same kind of coin. In earnest, in this sport, the pleasure I give more tickles my imagination than that they give me; now, he has nothing of generosity in him who can receive pleasure where he confers none—it must needs be a mean soul that will owe all, and can be content to maintain relations with persons to whom he is a continual charge; there is no beauty, grace, nor privacy so exquisite that a gentleman ought to desire at this rate. If they can only be kind to us out of pity, I had much rather die than live upon charity. I would have right to ask, in the style wherein I heard them beg in Italy: Do good for yourself, or after the manner that Cyrus exhorted his soldiers, "Who loves himself let him follow me." "Consort yourself," some one will say to me, "with women of your own condition, whom like fortune will render more easy to your desire." O ridiculous and insipid composition!—

"I would not pluck the beard from a dead lion."

Xenophon lays it for an objection and an accusation against Menon, that he never made love to any but old women. For my part, I take more pleasure in but seeing the just and sweet mixture of two young beauties, or only in meditating on it in my fancy, than myself in acting second in a pitiful and imperfect conjunction; I leave that fantastic appetite to the Emperor Galba, who was only for old curried flesh: and to this poor wretch:—

"O would the gods arrange that such I might see thee, and bring dear kisses to thy changed locks, and embrace thy withered body with my arms!"

Amongst chief deformities I reckon forced and artificial beauties: Hemon, a young boy of Chios, thinking by fine dressing to acquire the beauty that nature had denied him, came to the philosopher Arcesilaus and asked him if it was possible for a wise man to be in love—"Yes," replied he, "provided it be not with a farded and adulterated beauty like thine." Ugliness of a confessed antiquity is to me less old and less ugly than another that is polished and plastered up. Shall I speak it, without the danger of having my throat cut? love, in my opinion, is not properly and naturally in its season, but in the age next to childhood:—

"Whom if thou shouldst place in a company of girls, it would require a thousand experts to distinguish him, with his loose locks and

ambiguous countenance:"

nor beauty neither; for whereas Homer extends it so far as to the budding of the beard, Plato himself has remarked this as rare: and the reason why the sophist Bion so pleasantly called the first appearing hairs of adolescence Aristogitoi and Harmodioi is sufficiently known. I find it in virility already in some sort a little out of date, though not so much as in old age:—

"For it uncivilly passes over withered oaks (old women):"

and Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, like a woman, very far extends the advantage of women, ordaining that it is time, at thirty years old, to convert the title of fair into that of good. The shorter authority we give to love over our lives, 'tis so much the better for us. Do but observe his port; 'tis a beardless boy. Who knows not how, in his school they proceed contrary to all order; study, exercise, and usage are their ways for insufficiency: there novices rule:—

"Love ignores rule."

Doubtless his conduct is much more graceful when mixed with inadvertency and trouble; miscarriages and ill successes give him point and grace; provided it be sharp and eager, 'tis no great matter whether it be prudent or no: do but observe how he goes reeling, tripping, and playing: you put him in the stocks when you guide him by art and wisdom; and he is restrained of his divine liberty when put into those hairy and callous clutches.

As to the rest, I often hear the women set out this intelligence as entirely spiritual, and disdain to put the interest the senses there have into consideration; everything there serves; but I can say that I have often seen that we have excused the weakness of their understandings in favor of their outward beauty, but have never yet seen that in favor of mind, how mature and full soever, any of them would hold out a hand to a body that was never so little in decadence. Why does not some one of them take it into her head to make that noble Socratical bargain between body and soul, purchasing a philosophical and spiritual intelligence and generation at the price of her thighs, which is the highest price she can get for them? Plato ordains in his Laws that he who has performed any signal and advantageous exploit in war may not be refused during the whole expedition, his age or ugliness notwithstanding, a kiss or any other amorous favor from any woman whatever. What he thinks to be so just in recommendation of military valor,

why may it not be the same in recommendation of any other good quality? and why does not some woman take a fancy to possess over her companions the glory of this chaste love?

I may well say chaste:—

"For when they sometimes engage in love's battle, his sterile ardor lights up but as the flame of a straw:"

the vices that are stifled in the thought are not the worst.

To conclude this notable commentary, which has escaped from me in a torrent of babble, a torrent sometimes impetuous and hurtful:—

"As when an apple, sent by a lover secretly to his mistress, falls from the chaste virgin's bosom, where she had quite forgotten it; when, starting at her mother's coming in, it is shaken out and rolls over the floor before her eyes, a conscious blush covers her face."

Summer. From painting by Il. Makart.

I say that males and females are cast in the same mould, and that, education and usage excepted, the difference is not great. Plato indifferently invites both the one and the other to the society of all studies, exercises, and vocations, both military and civil, in his Commonwealth; and the philosopher Antisthenes rejected all distinction betwixt their virtue and ours. It is much more easy to accuse one sex than to excuse the other; 'tis according to the saying:—

"The Pot and the Kettle."

OF COACHES

IT IS very easy to verify, that great authors, when they write of causes, not only make use of those they think to be the true causes, but also of those they believe not to be so, provided they have in them some beauty and invention: they speak true and usefully enough, if it be ingeniously. We cannot make ourselves sure of the supreme cause, and therefore crowd a great many together, to see if it may not accidentally be amongst them:—

- "Namque unam dicere causam
- Non satis est, verum plures, unde una tamen sit."

Do you ask me, whence comes the custom of blessing those who sneeze? We break wind three several ways; that which sallies from below is too filthy; that which breaks out from the mouth carries with it some reproach of gluttony; the third is sneezing, which, because it proceeds from the head and is without offence, we give it this civil reception: do not laugh at this distinction; they say 'tis Aristotle.

I think I have seen in Plutarch (who of all the authors I know, is he who has best mixed art with nature, and judgment with knowledge), his giving as a reason for the rising of the stomach in those who are at sea, that it is occasioned by fear; having first found out some reason by which he proves that fear may produce such an effect. I, who am very subject to it, know well that this cause concerns not me; and know it, not by argument, but by necessary experience. Without instancing what has been told me, that the same thing often happens in beasts, especially hogs, who are out of all apprehension of danger; and what an acquaintance of mine told me of himself, that though very subject to it, the disposition to vomit has three or four times gone off him, being very afraid in a violent storm, as it happened to that ancient:—

"I was too ill to think of danger;"

I was never afraid upon the water, nor indeed in any other peril (and I have had enough before my eyes that would have sufficed, if death be one), so as to be astounded and to lose my judgment. Fear springs sometimes as much from want of judgment as from want of courage. All the dangers I have been in I have looked upon without winking, with an open, sound, and

entire sight; and, indeed, a man must have courage to fear. It formerly served me better than other help, so to order and regulate my retreat, that it was, if not without fear, nevertheless without affright and astonishment; it was agitated, indeed, but not amazed or stupefied. Great souls go yet much farther, and present to us flights, not only steady and temperate, but moreover lofty. Let us make a relation of that which Alcibiades reports of Socrates, his fellow in arms: "I found him," says he, "after the rout of our army, him and Lachez, last among those who fled, and considered him at my leisure and in security, for I was mounted upon a good horse, and he on foot, as he had fought. I took notice, in the first place, how much judgment and resolution he showed, in comparison of Lachez, and then the bravery of his march, nothing different from his ordinary gait; his sight firm and regular, considering and judging what passed about him, looking one while upon those, and then upon others, friends and enemies, after such a manner as encouraged those, and signified to the others that he would sell his life dear to any one who should attempt to take it from him, and so they came off; for people are not willing to attack such kind of men, but pursue those they see are in a fright." That is the testimony of this great captain, which teaches us, what we every day experience, that nothing so much throws us into dangers as an inconsiderate eagerness of getting ourselves clear of them:—

"When there is least fear, there is for the most part least danger."

Our people are to blame who say that such a one is afraid of death, when they would express that he thinks of it and foresees it: foresight is equally convenient in what concerns us, whether good or ill. To consider and judge of danger is, in some sort, the reverse to being astounded. I do not find myself strong enough to sustain the force and impetuosity of this passion of fear, nor of any other vehement passion whatever: if I was once conquered and beaten down by it, I should never rise again very sound. Whoever should once make my soul lose her footing, would never set her upright again: she retastes and researches herself too profoundly, and too much to the quick, and therefore would never let the wound she had received heal and cicatrize. It has been well for me that no sickness has yet discomposed her: at every charge made upon me, I preserve my utmost opposition and defence; by which means the first that should rout me would keep me from ever rallying again. I have no after-game to play: on which side soever the inundation breaks my banks, I lie upon, and am drowned

without remedy. Epicurus says, that a wise man can never become a fool; I have an opinion reverse to this sentence, which is, that he who has once been a very fool, will never after be very wise. God grants me cold according to my cloth, and passions proportionable to the means I have to withstand them: nature having laid me open on the one side, has covered me on the other; having disarmed me of strength, she has armed me with insensibility and an apprehension that is regular, or, if you will, dull.

I cannot now long endure (and when I was young could much less) either coach, litter, or boat, and hate all other riding but on horseback, both in town and country. But I can bear a litter worse than a coach; and, by the same reason, a rough agitation upon the water, whence fear is produced, better than the motions of a calm. At the little jerks of oars, stealing the vessel from under us, I find, I know not how, both my head and my stomach disordered; neither can I endure to sit upon a tottering chair. When the sail or the current carries us equally, or that we are towed, the equal agitation does not disturb me at all; 'tis an interrupted motion that offends me, and most of all when most slow: I cannot otherwise express it. The physicians have ordered me to squeeze and gird myself about the bottom of the belly with a napkin to remedy this evil; which however I have not tried, being accustomed to wrestle with my own defects, and overcome them myself.

Would my memory serve me, I should not think my time ill-spent in setting down here the infinite variety that history presents us of the use of chariots in the service of war: various, according to the nations and according to the age; in my opinion, of great necessity and effect; so that it is a wonder that we have lost all knowledge of them. I will only say this, that very lately, in our fathers' time, the Hungarians made very advantageous use of them against the Turks; having in every one of them a targetter and a musketeer, and a number of harquebuses piled ready and loaded, and all covered with a pavesade like a galliot. They formed the front of their battle with three thousand such coaches, and after the cannon had played, made them all pour in their shot upon the enemy, who had to swallow that volley before they tasted of the rest, which was no little advance; and that done, these chariots charged into their squadrons to break them and open a way for the rest; besides the use they might make of them to flank the soldiers in a place of danger when marching to the field, or to cover a post, and fortify it in haste. In my time, a gentleman on one of our frontiers, unwieldy of body, and finding no horse able to carry his weight,

having a quarrel, rode through the country in a chariot of this fashion, and found great convenience in it. But let us leave these chariots of war.

As if their effeminacy had not been sufficiently known by better proofs, the last kings of our first race travelled in a chariot drawn by four oxen. Mark Antony was the first at Rome who caused himself to be drawn in a coach by lions, and a singing wench with him.

Heliogabalus did since as much, calling himself Cybele, the mother of the gods; and also drawn by tigers, taking upon him the person of the god Bacchus; he also sometimes harnessed two stags to his coach, another time four dogs, and another four naked wenches, causing himself to be drawn by them in pomp, stark naked too. The Emperor Firmus caused his chariot to be drawn by ostriches of a prodigious size, so that it seemed rather to fly than roll.

The strangeness of these inventions puts this other fancy in my head: that it is a kind of pusillanimity in monarchs, and a testimony that they do not sufficiently understand themselves what they are, when they study to make themselves honored and to appear great by excessive expense: it were indeed excusable in a foreign country, but amongst their own subjects, where they are in sovereign command, and may do what they please, it derogates from their dignity the most supreme degree of honor to which they can arrive: just as, methinks, it is superfluous in a private gentleman to go finely dressed at home; his house, his attendants, and his kitchen sufficiently answer for him. The advice that Isocrates gives his king seems to be grounded upon reason: that he should be splendid in plate and furniture; forasmuch as it is an expense of duration that devolves on his successors; and that he should avoid all magnificences that will in a short time be forgotten. I loved to go fine when I was a younger brother, for want of other ornament; and it became me well: there are some upon whom their rich clothes weep. We have strange stories of the frugality of our kings about their own persons and in their gifts: kings who were great in reputation, valor, and fortune. Demosthenes vehemently opposes the law of his city that assigned the public money for the pomp of their public plays and festivals: he would that their greatness should be seen in numbers of ships well equipped, and good armies well provided for; and there is good reason to condemn Theophrastus, who, in his Book on Riches, establishes a contrary opinion, and maintains that sort of expense to be the true fruit of abundance. They are delights, says Aristotle, that only please the baser sort

of the people, and that vanish from the memory so soon as the people are sated with them, and for which no serious and judicious man can have any esteem. This money would, in my opinion, be much more royally, as more profitably, justly, and durably, laid out in ports, havens, walls, and fortifications; in sumptuous buildings, churches, hospitals, colleges, the reforming of streets and highways: wherein Pope Gregory XIII. will leave a laudable memory to future times: and wherein our Queen Catherine would for long years manifest her natural liberality and munificence, did her means supply her affection. Fortune has done me a great despite in interrupting the noble structure of the Pont-Neuf of our great city, and depriving me of the hope of seeing it finished before I die.

Moreover, it seems to subjects, who are spectators of these triumphs, that their own riches are exposed before them, and that they are entertained at their own expense: for the people are apt to presume of kings, as we do of our servants, that they are to take care to provide us all things necessary in abundance, but not touch it themselves; and therefore the Emperor Galba, being pleased with a musician who played to him at supper, called for his money-box, and gave him a handful of crowns that he took out of it, with these words: "This is not the public money, but my own." Yet it so falls out that the people, for the most part, have reason on their side, and that the princes feed their eyes with what they have need of to fill their bellies.

Liberality itself is not in its true lustre in a sovereign hand: private men have therein the most right; for, to take it exactly, a king has nothing properly his own; he owes himself to others: authority is not given in favor of the magistrate, but of the people; a superior is never made so for his own profit, but for the profit of the inferior, and a physician for the sick person, and not for himself: all magistracy, as well as all art, has its end out of itself:

"No art ever reverts on itself:"

wherefore the tutors of young princes, who make it their business to imprint in them this virtue of liberality, and preach to them to deny nothing and to think nothing so well spent as what they give (a doctrine that I have known in great credit in my time), either have more particular regard to their own profit than to that of their master, or ill understand to whom they speak. It is too easy a thing to inculcate liberality on him who has as much as he will to practise it with at the expense of others; and, the estimate not being proportioned to the measure of the gift but to the measure of the

means of him who gives it, it comes to nothing in so mighty hands; they find themselves prodigal before they can be reputed liberal. And it is but a little recommendation, in comparison with other royal virtues: and the only one, as the tyrant Dionysius said, that suits well with tyranny itself. I should rather teach him this verse of the ancient laborer:—

> *"That whoever will have a good crop must sow with his hand, and not pour out of the sack:"*

he must scatter it abroad, and not lay it on a heap in one place: and that, seeing he is to give, or, to say better, to pay and restore to so many people according as they have deserved, he ought to be a loyal and discreet disposer. If the liberality of a prince be without measure or discretion, I had rather he were covetous.

Royal virtue seems most to consist in justice; and of all the parts of justice that best denotes a king which accompanies liberality, for this they have particularly reserved to be performed by themselves, whereas all other sorts of justice they remit to the administration of others. An immoderate bounty is a very weak means to acquire for them good will; it checks more people than it allures:—

> *"By how much more you use it to many, by so much less will you be in a capacity to use it to many more. And what greater folly can there be than to order it so that what you would willingly do, you cannot do longer;"*

and if it be conferred without due respect of merit, it puts him out of countenance who receives it, and is received ungraciously. Tyrants have been sacrificed to the hatred of the people by the hands of those very men they have unjustly advanced; such kind of men as buffoons, panders, fiddlers, and such ragamuffins, thinking to assure to themselves the possession of benefits unduly received, if they manifest to have him in hatred and disdain of whom they hold them, and in this associate themselves to the common judgment and opinion.

The subjects of a prince excessive in gifts grow excessive in asking, and regulate their demands, not by reason, but by example. We have, seriously, very often reason to blush at our own impudence: we are over-paid, according to justice, when the recompense equals our service; for do we owe nothing of natural obligation to our princes? If he bear our charges, he does too much; 'tis enough that he contribute to them: the overplus is

called benefit, which cannot be exacted: for the very name Liberality sounds of Liberty.

In our fashion it is never done; we never reckon what we have received; we are only for the future liberality; wherefore, the more a prince exhausts himself in giving, the poorer he grows in friends. How should he satisfy immoderate desires, that still increase as they are fulfilled? He who has his thoughts upon taking, never thinks of what he has taken; covetousness has nothing so properly and so much its own as ingratitude.

The example of Cyrus will not do amiss in this place, to serve the kings of these times for a touchstone to know whether their gifts are well or ill bestowed, and to see how much better that emperor conferred them than they do, by which means they are reduced to borrow of unknown subjects, and rather of them whom they have wronged than of them on whom they have conferred their benefits, and so receive aids wherein there is nothing of gratuitous but the name. Croesus reproached him with his bounty, and cast up to how much his treasure would amount if he had been a little closer-handed. He had a mind to justify his liberality, and therefore sent despatches into all parts to the grandees of his dominions whom he had particularly advanced, entreating every one of them to supply him with as much money as they could, for a pressing occasion, and to send him particulars of what each could advance. When all these answers were brought to him, every one of his friends, not thinking it enough barely to offer him so much as he had received from his bounty, and adding to it a great deal of his own, it appeared that the sum amounted to a great deal more than Croesus' reckoning. Whereupon Cyrus: "I am not," said he, "less in love with riches than other princes, but rather a better husband; you see with how small a venture I have acquired the inestimable treasure of so many friends, and how much more faithful treasurers they are to me than mercenary men without obligation, without affection; and my money better laid up than in chests, bringing upon me the hatred, envy, and contempt of other princes."

The emperors excused the superfluity of their plays and public spectacles by reason that their authority in some sort (at least in outward appearance) depended upon the will of the people of Rome, who, time out of mind, had been accustomed to be entertained and caressed with such shows and excesses. But they were private citizens, who had nourished this custom to gratify their fellow-citizens and companions (and chiefly out of

their own purses) by such profusion and magnificence: it had quite another taste when the masters came to imitate it:—

"The transferring of money from the right owners to strangers ought not to seem liberal."

Philip, seeing that his son went about by presents to gain the affection of the Macedonians, reprimanded him in a letter after this manner: "What! hast thou a mind that thy subjects shall look upon thee as their cash-keeper and not as their king? Wilt thou tamper with them to win their affections? Do it, then, by the benefits of thy virtue, and not by those of thy chest."

And yet it was, doubtless, a fine thing to bring and plant within the amphitheatre a great number of vast trees, with all their branches in their full verdure, representing a great shady forest, disposed in excellent order; and, the first day, to throw into it a thousand ostriches and a thousand stags, a thousand boars, and a thousand fallow-deer, to be killed and disposed of by the people: the next day, to cause a hundred great lions, a hundred leopards, and three hundred bears to be killed in his presence; and for the third day, to make three hundred pair of gladiators fight it out to the last, as the Emperor Probus did. It was also very fine to see those vast amphitheatres, all faced with marble without, curiously wrought with figures and statues, and within glittering with rare enrichments:—

"A belt glittering with jewels, and a portico overlaid with gold emulously shine—"

all the sides of this vast space filled and environed, from the bottom to the top, with three or fourscore rows of seats, all of marble also, and covered with cushions:—

"Let him go out, he said, if he has any sense of shame, and rise from the equestrian cushion, whose estate does not satisfy the law;"

where a hundred thousand men might sit at their ease: and, the place below, where the games were played, to make it, by art, first open and cleave in chasms, representing caves that vomited out the beasts designed for the spectacle; and then, secondly, to be overflowed by a deep sea, full of sea monsters, and laden with ships of war, to represent a naval battle; and, thirdly, to make it dry and even again for the combat of the gladiators; and, for the fourth scene, to have it strown with vermilion grain and storax, instead of sand, there to make a solemn feast for all that infinite number of people: the last act of one only day:—

"How often have we seen the stage of the theatre descend and part asunder, and from a chasm in the earth wild beasts emerge, and then presently give birth to a grove of gilded trees, that put forth blossoms of enamelled flowers. Nor yet of sylvan marvels alone had we sight: I saw sea-calves fight with bears, and a deformed sort of cattle, resembling horses, which are bred in that stream."

Sometimes they made a high mountain advance itself, covered with fruit-trees and other leafy trees, sending down rivulets of water from the top, as from the mouth of a fountain: otherwhiles, a great ship was seen to come rolling in, which opened and divided of itself, and after having disgorged from the hold four or five hundred beasts for fight, closed again, and vanished without help. At other times, from the floor of this place, they made spouts of perfumed water dart their streams upward, and so high as to sprinkle all that infinite multitude. To defend themselves from the injuries of the weather, they had that vast place one while covered over with purpole curtains of needlework, and by-and-by with silk of one or another color, which they drew off or on in a moment, as they had a mind:—

"The curtains, though the sun should scorch the spectators, are drawn in, when Hermogenes appears."

The network also that was set before the people to defend them from the violence of these turned-out beasts was woven of gold:—

"The woven nets are refulgent with gold."

If there be anything excusable in such excesses as these, it is where the novelty and invention create more wonder than the expense; even in these vanities we discover how fertile those ages were in other kind of wits than these of ours. It is with this sort of fertility, as with all other products of nature: not that she there and then employed her utmost force: we do not go; we rather run up and down, and whirl this way and that; we turn back the way we came. I am afraid our knowledge is weak in all senses; we neither see far forward nor far backward; our understanding comprehends little, and lives but a little while; 'tis short both in extent of time and extent of matter:—

"Many brave men lived before Agamemnon, but all are pressed by the long night unmourned and unknown."

"Why before the Theban war and the destruction of Troy, have not other poets sung other events?"

And the narrative of Solon, of what he had learned from the Egyptian priests, touching the long life of their state, and their manner of learning and preserving foreign histories, is not, methinks, a testimony to be refused in this consideration:—

> *"Could we see on all parts the unlimited magnitude of regions and of times, upon which the mind being intent, could wander so far and wide, that no limit is to be seen, in which it can bound its eye, we should, in that infinite immensity, discover an infinite force of innumerable atoms."*

Though all that has arrived, by report, of our knowledge of times past should be true, and known by some one person, it would be less than nothing in comparison of what is unknown. And of this same image of the world, which glides away whilst we live upon it, how wretched and limited is the knowledge of the most curious; not only of particular events, which fortune often renders exemplary and of great concern, but of the state of great governments and nations, a hundred more escape us than ever come to our knowledge. We make a mighty business of the invention of artillery and printing, which other men at the other end of the world, in China, had a thousand years ago. Did we but see as much of the world as we do not see, we should perceive, we may well believe, a perpetual multiplication and vicissitude of forms. There is nothing single and rare in respect of nature, but in respect of our knowledge, which is a wretched foundation whereon to ground our rules, and that represents to us a very false image of things. As we nowadays vainly conclude the declension and decrepitude of the world, by the arguments we extract from our own weakness and decay:—

> *"Our age is feeble, and the earth less fertile;"*

so did he vainly conclude as to its birth and youth, by the vigor he observed in the wits of his time, abounding in novelties and the invention of divers arts:—

> *"But, as I am of opinion, the whole of the world is of recent origin, nor had its commencement in remote times; wherefore it is that some arts are still being refined, and some just on the increase; at present many additions are being made to shipping."*

Our world has lately discovered another (and who will assure us that it is the last of its brothers, since the Daemons, the Sybils, and we ourselves have been ignorant of this till now?), as large, well-peopled, and fruitful as this whereon we live; and yet so raw and childish, that we are still teaching

it its A B C: ’tis not above fifty years since it knew neither letters, weights, measures, vestments, corn, nor vines: it was then quite naked in the mother’s lap, and only lived upon what she gave it. If we rightly conclude of our end, and this poet of the youthfulness of that age of his, that other world will only enter into the light when this of ours shall make its exit; the universe will fall into paralysis; one member will be useless, the other in vigor. I am very much afraid that we have greatly precipitated its declension and ruin by our contagion; and that we have sold it our opinions and our arts at a very dear rate. It was an infant world, and yet we have not whipped and subjected it to our discipline by the advantage of our natural worth and force, neither have we won it by our justice and goodness, nor subdued it by our magnanimity. Most of their answers, and the negotiations we have had with them, witness that they were nothing behind us in pertinency and clearness of natural understanding. The astonishing magnificence of the cities of Cusco and Mexico, and, amongst many other things, the garden of the king, where all the trees, fruits, and plants, according to the order and stature they have in a garden, were excellently formed in gold; as, in his cabinet, were all the animals bred upon his territory and in its seas; and the beauty of their manufactures, in jewels, feathers, cotton, and painting, gave ample proof that they were as little inferior to us in industry. But as to what concerns devotion, observance of the laws, goodness, liberality, loyalty, and plain dealing, it was of use to us that we had not so much as they; for they have lost, sold, and betrayed themselves by this advantage over us.

As to boldness and courage, stability, constancy against pain, hunger, and death, I should not fear to oppose the examples I find amongst them to the most famous examples of elder times that we find in our records on this side of the world. For as to those who subdued them, take but away the tricks and artifices they practiced to gull them, and the just astonishment it was to those nations to see so sudden and unexpected an arrival of men with beards, differing in language, religion, shape, and countenance, from so remote a part of the world, and where they had never heard there was any habitation, mounted upon great unknown monsters, against those who had not only never seen a horse, but had never seen any other beast trained up to carry a man or any other loading; shelled in a hard and shining skin, with a cutting and glittering weapon in his hand, against them, who, out of wonder at the brightness of a looking-glass or a knife, would exchange great treasures of gold and pearl; and who had neither knowledge, nor matter

with which, at leisure, they could penetrate our steel: to which may be added the lightning and thunder of our cannon and harquebuses, enough to frighten Caesar himself, if surprised, with so little experience, against people naked, except where the invention of a little quilted cotton was in use, without other arms, at the most, than bows, stones, staves, and bucklers of wood; people surprised under color of friendship and good faith, by the curiosity of seeing strange and unknown things; take but away, I say, this disparity from the conquerors, and you take away all the occasion of so many victories. When I look upon that invincible ardor wherewith so many thousands of men, women, and children so often presented and threw themselves into inevitable dangers for the defence of their gods and liberties; that generous obstinacy to suffer all extremities and difficulties, and death itself, rather than submit to the dominion of those by whom they had been so shamefully abused; and some of them choosing to die of hunger and fasting, being prisoners, rather than to accept of nourishment from the hands of their so basely victorious enemies: I see, that whoever would have attacked them upon equal terms of arms, experience, and number, would have had a hard, and, peradventure, a harder game to play than in any other war we have seen.

Why did not so noble a conquest fall under Alexander, or the ancient Greeks and Romans; and so great a revolution and mutation of so many empires and nations, fall into hands that would have gently levelled, rooted up, and made plain and smooth whatever was rough and savage amongst them, and that would have cherished and propagated the good seeds that nature had there produced; mixing not only with the culture of land and the ornament of cities, the arts of this part of the world, in what was necessary, but also the Greek and Roman virtues, with those that were original of the country? What a reparation had it been to them, and what a general good to the whole world, had our first examples and deportments in those parts allured those people to the admiration and imitation of virtue, and had begotten betwixt them and us a fraternal society and intelligence? How easy had it been to have made advantage of souls so innocent, and so eager to learn, having, for the most part, naturally so good inclinations before? Whereas, on the contrary, we have taken advantage of their ignorance and inexperience, with greater ease to incline them to treachery, luxury, avarice, and towards all sorts of inhumanity and cruelty, by the pattern and example of our manners. Who ever enhanced the price of merchandise at such a rate?

So many cities levelled with the ground, so many nations exterminated, so many millions of people fallen by the edge of the sword, and the richest and most beautiful part of the world turned upside down, for the traffic of pearl and pepper? Mechanic victories! Never did ambition, never did public animosities, engage men against one another in such miserable hostilities, in such miserable calamities.

Certain Spaniards, coasting the sea in quest of their mines, landed in a fruitful and pleasant and very well peopled country, and there made to the inhabitants their accustomed professions: "that they were peaceable men, who were come from a very remote country, and sent on the behalf of the King of Castile, the greatest prince of the habitable world, to whom the Pope, God's vicegerent upon earth, had given the principality of all the Indies; that if they would become tributaries to him, they should be very gently and courteously used;" at the same time requiring of them victuals for their nourishment, and gold whereof to make some pretended medicine; setting forth, moreover, the belief in one only God, and the truth of our religion, which they advised them to embrace, whereunto they also added some threats. To which they received this answer: "That as to their being peaceable, they did not seem to be such, if they were so. As to their king, since he was fain to beg, he must be necessitous and poor; and he who had made him this gift, must be a man who loved dissension, to give that to another which was none of his own, to bring it into dispute against the ancient possessors. As to victuals, they would supply them; that of gold they had little; it being a thing they had in very small esteem, as of no use to the service of life, whereas their only care was to pass it over happily and pleasantly: but that what they could find excepting what was employed in the service of their gods, they might freely take. As to one only God, the proposition had pleased them well; but that they would not change their religion, both because they had so long and happily lived in it, and that they were not wont to take advice of any but their friends, and those they knew: as to their menaces, it was a sign of want of judgment to threaten those whose nature and power were to them unknown; that, therefore, they were to make haste to quit their coast, for they were not used to take the civilities and professions of armed men and strangers in good part; otherwise they should do by them as they had done by those others," showing them the heads of several executed men round the walls of their city. A fair example of the babble of these children. But so it is, that the Spaniards did not, either

in this or in several other places, where they did not find the merchandise they sought, make any stay or attempt, whatever other conveniences were there to be had; witness my Cannibals.

Of the two most puissant monarchs of that world, and, peradventure, of this, kings of so many kings, and the last they turned out, he of Peru, having been taken in a battle, and put to so excessive a ransom as exceeds all belief, and it being faithfully paid, and he having, by his conversation, given manifest signs of a frank, liberal, and constant spirit, and of a clear and settled understanding, the conquerors had a mind, after having exacted one million three hundred and twenty-five thousand and five hundred weight of gold, besides silver, and other things which amounted to no less (so that their horses were shod with massy gold), still to see, at the price of what disloyalty and injustice whatever, what the remainder of the treasures of this king might be, and to possess themselves of that also. To this end a false accusation was preferred against him, and false witnesses brought to prove that he went about to raise an insurrection in his provinces, to procure his own liberty; whereupon, by the virtuous sentence of those very men who had by this treachery conspired his ruin, he was condemned to be publicly hanged and strangled, after having made him buy off the torment of being burnt alive, by the baptism they gave him immediately before execution; a horrid and unheard-of barbarity, which, nevertheless, he underwent without giving way either in word or look, with a truly grave and royal behavior. After which, to calm and appease the people, aroused and astounded at so strange a thing, they counterfeited great sorrow for his death, and appointed most sumptuous funerals.

The other king of Mexico, having for a long time defended his beleaguered city, and having in this siege manifested the utmost of what suffering and perseverance can do, if ever prince and people did, and his misfortune having delivered him alive into his enemies' hands, upon articles of being treated like a king, neither did he in his captivity discover anything unworthy of that title. His enemies, after their victory, not finding so much gold as they expected, when they had searched and rifled with their utmost diligence, they went about to procure discoveries by the most cruel torments they could invent upon the prisoners they had taken: but having profited nothing by these, their courage being greater than their torments, they arrived at last to such a degree of fury, as, contrary to their faith and the law of nations, to condemn the king himself, and one of the principal

noblemen of his court to the rack, in the presence of one another. This lord, finding himself overcome with pain, being environed with burning coals, pitifully turned his dying eyes towards his master, as it were to ask him pardon, that he was able to endure no more; whereupon the king darting at him a fierce and severe look, as reproaching his cowardice and pusillanimity, with a harsh and constant voice said to him thus only: “And what dost thou think I suffer? am I in a bath? am I more at ease than thou?” Whereupon the other immediately quailed under the torment and died upon the spot. The king, half roasted, was carried thence; not so much out of pity (for what compassion ever touched so barbarous souls, who, upon the doubtful information of some vessel of gold to be made a prey of, caused not only a man, but a king, so great in fortune and desert, to be broiled before their eyes), but because his constancy rendered their cruelty still more shameful. They afterwards hanged him for having nobly attempted to deliver himself by arms from so long a captivity and subjection, and he died with a courage becoming so magnanimous a prince.

Another time, they burnt in the same fire four hundred and sixty men alive at once, the four hundred of the common people, the sixty the principal lords of a province, simply prisoners of war. We have these narratives from themselves: for they not only own it, but boast of it and publish it. Could it be for a testimony of their justice or their zeal to religion? Doubtless these are ways too differing and contrary to so holy an end. Had they proposed to themselves to extend our faith, they would have considered that it does not amplify in the possession of territories, but in the gaining of men; and would have more than satisfied themselves with the slaughters occasioned by the necessity of war, without indifferently mixing a massacre, as upon wild beasts, as universal as fire and sword could make it; having only, by intention, saved so many as they meant to make miserable slaves of, for the work and service of their mines; so that many of the captains were put to death upon the place of conquest, by order of the kings of Castile, justly offended with the horror of their deportment, and almost all of them hated and disesteemed. God meritoriously permitted that all this great plunder should be swallowed up by the sea in transportation, or in the civil wars wherewith they devoured one another; and most of the men themselves were buried in a foreign land without any fruit of their victory.

That the revenue from these countries, though in the hands of so parsimonious and so prudent a prince, so little answers the expectation given of it to his predecessors, and to that original abundance of riches which was found at the first landing in those new discovered countries (for though a great deal be fetched thence, yet we see 'tis nothing in comparison of that which might be expected), is that the use of coin was there utterly unknown, and that consequently their gold was found all hoarded together, being of no other use but for ornament and show, as a furniture reserved from father to son by many puissant kings, who were ever draining their mines to make this vast heap of vessels and statues for the decoration of their palaces and temples; whereas our gold is always in motion and traffic; we cut it into a thousand small pieces, and cast it into a thousand forms, and scatter and disperse it in a thousand ways. But suppose our kings should thus hoard up all the gold they could get in several ages and let it lie idle by them.

Those of the kingdom of Mexico were in some sort more civilized and more advanced in arts than the other nations about them. Therefore did they judge, as we do, that the world was near its period, and looked upon the desolation we brought amongst them as a certain sign of it. They believed that the existence of the world was divided into five ages, and in the life of five successive suns, of which four had already ended their time, and that this which gave them light was the fifth. The first perished, with all other creatures, by a universal inundation of water; the second by the heavens falling upon us and suffocating every living thing: to which age they assigned the giants, and showed bones to the Spaniards, according to the proportion of which the stature of men amounted to twenty feet; the third by fire, which burned and consumed all; the fourth by an emotion of the air and wind, which came with such violence as to beat down even many mountains, wherein the men died not, but were turned into baboons. What impressions will not the weakness of human belief admit? After the death of this fourth sun, the world was twenty-five years in perpetual darkness: in the fifteenth of which a man and a woman were created, who restored the human race: ten years after, upon a certain day, the sun appeared newly created, and since the account of their year takes beginning from that day: the third day after its creation the ancient gods died, and the new ones were since born daily. After what manner they think this last sun shall perish, my author knows not; but their number of this fourth change agrees with the

great conjunction of stars which eight hundred and odd years ago, as astrologers suppose, produced great alterations and novelties in the world.

As to pomp and magnificence, upon the account of which I engaged in this discourse, neither Greece, Rome, nor Egypt, whether for utility, difficulty, or state, can compare any of their works with the highway to be seen in Peru, made by the kings of the country, from the city of Quito to that of Cusco (three hundred leagues), straight, even, five-and-twenty paces wide, paved, and provided on both sides with high and beautiful walls; and close by them, and all along on the inside, two perennial streams, bordered with beautiful plants, which they call moly. In this work, where they met with rocks and mountains, they cut them through, and made them even, and filled up pits and valleys with lime and stone to make them level. At the end of every day's journey are beautiful palaces, furnished with provisions, vestments, and arms, as well for travellers as for the armies that are to pass that way. In the estimate of this work I have reckoned the difficulty which is especially considerable in that place; they did not build with any stones less than ten feet square, and had no other conveniency of carriage but by drawing their load themselves by force of arm, and knew not so much as the art of scaffolding, nor any other way of standing to their work, but by throwing up earth against the building as it rose higher, taking it away again when they had done.

Let us here return to our coaches. Instead of these, and of all other sorts of carriages, they caused themselves to be carried upon men's shoulders. This last king of Peru, the day that he was taken, was thus carried betwixt two upon staves of gold, and set in a chair of gold in the middle of his army. As many of these sedan-men as were killed to make him fall (for they would take him alive), so many others (and they contended for it) took the place of those who were slain, so that they could never beat him down, what slaughter soever they made of these people, till a horseman, seizing upon him, brought him to the ground.

OF THE INCONVENIENCE OF GREATNESS

SINCE WE cannot attain unto it, let us revenge ourselves by railing at it; and yet it is not absolutely railing against anything to proclaim its defects, because they are in all things to be found, how beautiful or how much to be coveted soever. Greatness has, in general, this manifest advantage, that it can lower itself when it pleases, and has, very near, the choice of both the one and the other condition; for a man does not fall from all heights; there are several from which one may descend without falling down. It does, indeed, appear to me that we value it at too high a rate, and also overvalue the resolution of those whom we have either seen or heard have contemned it, or displaced themselves of their own accord: its essence is not so evidently commodious that a man may not, without a miracle, refuse it. I find it a very hard thing to undergo misfortunes, but to be content with a moderate measure of fortune, and to avoid greatness, I think a very easy matter. 'Tis, methinks, a virtue to which I, who am no conjuror, could without any great endeavor arrive. What, then, is to be expected from them that would yet put into consideration the glory attending this refusal, wherein there may lurk worse ambition than even in the desire itself, and fruition of greatness? Forasmuch as ambition never comports itself better, according to itself, than when it proceeds by obscure and unfrequented ways.

I incite my courage to patience, but I rein it as much as I can towards desire. I have as much to wish for as another, and allow my wishes as much liberty and indiscretion; but yet it never befell me to wish for either empire or royalty, or the eminency of those high and commanding fortunes: I do not aim that way; I love myself too well. When I think to grow greater, 'tis but very moderately, and by a compelled and timorous advancement, such as is proper for me in resolution, in prudence, in health, in beauty, and even in riches too; but this supreme reputation, this mighty authority, oppress my imagination; and, quite contrary to that other, I should, peradventure, rather choose to be the second or third in Perigord than the first at Paris: at least, without lying, rather the third at Paris than the first. I would neither dispute with a porter, a miserable unknown, nor make crowds open in adoration as I

pass. I am trained up to a moderate condition, as well by my choice as fortune; and have made it appear, in the whole conduct of my life and enterprises, that I have rather avoided than otherwise the climbing above the degree of fortune wherein God has placed me by my birth; all natural constitution is equally just and easy. My soul is such a poltroon, that I measure not good fortune by the height, but by the facility.

But if my heart be not great enough, 'tis open enough to make amends, at any one's request, freely to lay open its weakness. Should anyone put me upon comparing the life of L. Thorius Balbus, a brave man, handsome, learned, healthful, understanding, and abounding in all sorts of conveniences and pleasures, leading a quiet life, and all his own, his mind well prepared against death, superstition, pain, and other incumbrances of human necessity, dying, at last, in battle, with his sword in his hand, for the defence of his country, on the one part; and on the other part, the life of M. Regulus, so great and high as is known to every one, and his end admirable; the one without name and without dignity, the other exemplary and glorious to a wonder. I should doubtless say, as Cicero did, could I speak as well as he. But if I was to compare them with my own, I should then also say that the first is as much according to my capacity, and from desire, which I conform to my capacity, as the second is far beyond it; that I could not approach the last but with veneration, the other I could readily attain by use.

Let us return to our temporal greatness, from which we are digressed. I disrelish all dominion, whether active or passive. Otanes, one of the seven who had right to pretend to the kingdom of Persia, did as I should willingly have done, which was, that he gave up to his competitors his right of being promoted to it, either by election or by lot, provided that he and his might live in the empire out of all authority and subjection, those of the ancient laws excepted, and might enjoy all liberty that was not prejudicial to these, being as impatient of commanding as of being commanded.

The most painful and difficult employment in the world, in my opinion, is worthily to discharge the office of a king. I excuse more of their mistakes than men commonly do, in consideration of the intolerable weight of their function, which astounds me. 'Tis hard to keep measure in so immeasurable a power; yet so it is that it is, even to those who are not of the best nature, a singular incitement to virtue to be seated in a place where you cannot do the least good that shall not be put upon record, and where the least benefit redounds to so many men, and where your talent of

administration, like that of preachers, principally addresses itself to the people, no very exact judge, easy to deceive, and easily content. There are few things wherein we can give a sincere judgment, by reason that there are few wherein we have not, in some sort, a private interest. Superiority and inferiority, dominion and subjection, are bound to a natural envy and contest, and must of necessity perpetually intrench upon one another. I believe neither the one nor the other touching the rights of the other party; let reason therefore, which is inflexible and without passion, determine when we can avail ourselves of it. 'Tis not above a month ago that I read over two Scottish authors contending upon this subject, of whom he who stands for the people makes the king to be in a worse condition than a carter; he who writes for monarchy places him some degrees above God in power and sovereignty.

Now, the incommodity of greatness that I have taken to remark in this place, upon some occasion that has lately put it into my head, is this: there is not, peradventure, anything more pleasant in the commerce of men than the trials that we make against one another, out of emulation of honor and worth, whether in the exercises of the body or in those of the mind, wherein sovereign greatness can have no true part. And, in earnest, I have often thought that by force of respect itself men use princes disdainfully and injuriously in that particular; for the thing I was infinitely offended at in my childhood, that they who exercised with me forbore to do their best because they found me unworthy of their utmost endeavor, is what we see happen to them daily, every one finding himself unworthy to contend with them. If we discover that they have the least desire to get the best of us, there is no one who will not make it his business to give it them, and who will not rather betray his own glory than offend theirs; and will therein employ so much force only as is necessary to save their honor. What share have they, then, in the engagement, where every one is on their side? Methinks I see those paladins of ancient times presenting themselves to jousts and battle with enchanted arms and bodies. Brisson, running against Alexander, purposely missed his blow, and made a fault in his career; Alexander chid him for it, but he ought to have had him whipped. Upon this consideration Carneades said, that "the sons of princes learned nothing right but to manage horses, by reason that, in all their other exercises, every one bends and yields to them; but a horse, that is neither a flatterer nor a courtier, throws the son of a king with no more ceremony than he would throw that of a porter."

Homer was fain to consent that Venus, so sweet and delicate a goddess as she was, should be wounded at the battle of Troy, thereby to ascribe courage and boldness to her qualities that cannot possibly be in those who are exempt from danger. The gods are made to be angry, to fear, to run away, to be jealous, to grieve, to be transported with passions, to honor them with the virtues that, amongst us, are built upon these imperfections. Who does not participate in the hazard and difficulty, can claim no interest in the honor and pleasure that are the consequents of hazardous actions. 'Tis pity a man should be so potent that all things must give way to him; fortune therein sets you too remote from society, and places you in too great a solitude. This easiness and mean facility of making all things bow under you, is an enemy to all sorts of pleasure: 'tis to slide, not to go; 'tis to sleep, and not to live. Conceive man accompanied with omnipotence: you overwhelm him; he must beg disturbance and opposition as an alms: his being and his good are in indigence. Evil to man is in its turn good, and good evil. Neither is pain always to be shunned, nor pleasure always to be pursued.

Pysche beaten with birches by order of Venus. From painting by Adolphe Weber.

Their good qualities are dead and lost; for they can only be perceived by comparison, and we put them out of this: they have little knowledge of true praise, having their ears deafened with so continual and uniform an approbation. Have they to do with the stupidest of all their subjects? they have no means to take any advantage of him; if he but say: " 'Tis because he is my king," he thinks he has said enough to express that he therefore suffered himself to be overcome. This quality stifles and consumes the other

true and essential qualities: they are sunk in the royalty, and leave them nothing to recommend themselves with but actions that directly concern and serve the function of their place; 'tis so much to be a king, that this alone remains to them. The outer glare that environs him conceals and shrouds him from us; our sight is there repelled and dissipated, being filled and stopped by this prevailing light. The senate awarded the prize of eloquence to Tiberius; he refused it, esteeming that though it had been just, he could derive no advantage from a judgment so partial, and that was so little free to judge.

As we give them all advantages of honor, so do we soothe and authorize all their vices and defects, not only by approbation, but by imitation also. Every one of Alexander's followers carried his head on one side, as he did; and the flatterers of Dionysius ran against one another in his presence, and stumbled at and overturned whatever was under foot, to show they were as purblind as he. Hernia itself has also served to recommend a man to favor; I have seen deafness affected; and because the master hated his wife, Plutarch has seen his courtiers repudiate theirs, whom they loved; and which is yet more, uncleanliness and all manner of dissoluteness have so been in fashion; as also disloyalty, blasphemy, cruelty, heresy, superstition, irreligion, effeminacy, and worse, if worse there be; and by an example yet more dangerous than that of Mithridates, flatterers who, as their master pretended to the honor of a good physician, came to him to have incisions and cauteries made in their limbs; for these others suffered the soul, a more delicate and noble part, to be cauterized.

But to end where I began: the Emperor Adrian, disputing with the philosopher Favorinus about the interpretation of some word, Favorinus soon yielded him the victory; for which his friends rebuking him, "You talk simply," said he; "would you not have him wiser than I, who commands thirty legions?" Augustus wrote verses against Asinius Pollio, and "I," said Pollio, "say nothing, for it is not prudence to write in contest with him who has power to proscribe." And they were right. For Dionysius, because he could not equal Philoxenus in poesy and Plato in discourse, condemned the one to the quarries, and sent the other to be sold for a slave into the island of Aegina.

OF THE ART OF CONFERRING

’TIS A custom of our justice to condemn some for a warning to others. To condemn them for having done amiss, were folly, as Plato says, for what is done can never be undone; but ’tis to the end they may offend no more, and that others may avoid the example of their offence: we do not correct the man we hang; we correct others by him. I do the same; my errors are sometimes natural, incorrigible, and irremediable: but the good which virtuous men do to the public, in making themselves imitated, I, peradventure, may do in making my manners avoided:—

> *“Dost thou not see how ill the son of Albus lives? and how the indigent Barrus? a great warning lest any one should incline to dissipate his patrimony;”*

publishing and accusing my own imperfections, some one will learn to be afraid of them. The parts that I most esteem in myself, derive more honor from decrying, than for commending myself: which is the reason why I so often fall into, and so much insist upon that strain. But, when all is summed up, a man never speaks of himself without loss; a man’s accusations of himself are always believed; his praises never. There may, peradventure, be some of my own complexion who better instruct myself by contrariety than by similitude, and by avoiding than by imitation. The elder Cato was regarding this sort of discipline, when he said, “that the wise may learn more of fools, than fools can of the wise;” and Pausanias tells us of an ancient player upon the harp, who was wont to make his scholars go to hear one who played very ill, who lived over against him, that they might learn to hate his discords and false measures. The horror of cruelty more inclines me to clemency, than any example of clemency could possibly do. A good rider does not so much mend my seat, as an awkward attorney or Venetian on horseback; and a clownish way of speaking more reforms mine than the most correct. The ridiculous and simple look of another always warns and advises me; that which pricks, rouses and incites much better than that which tickles. The time is now proper for us to reform backward; more by dissenting than by agreeing; by differing more than by consent. Profiting little by good examples, I make use of those that are ill, which are everywhere to be found: I endeavor to render myself as agreeable as I see others offensive; as constant as I see others fickle; as affable as I see others

rough; as good as I see others evil: but I propose to myself impracticable measures.

The most fruitful and natural exercise of the mind, in my opinion, is conversation; I find the use of it more sweet than of any other action of life; and for that reason it is that, if I were now compelled to choose, I should sooner, I think, consent to lose my sight, than my hearing and speech. The Athenians, and also the Romans, kept this exercise in great honor in their academies; the Italians retain some traces of it to this day, to their great advantage, as is manifest by the comparison of our understandings with theirs. The study of books is a languishing and feeble motion that heats not, whereas conversation teaches and exercises at once. If I converse with a strong mind and a rough disputant, he presses upon my flanks, and pricks me right and left; his imaginations stir up mine, jealousy, glory, and contention, stimulate and raise me up to something above myself; and acquiescence is a quality altogether tedious in discourse. But, as our mind fortifies itself by the communication of vigorous and regular understandings, ’tis not to be expressed how much it loses and degenerates by the continual commerce and familiarity we have with mean and weak spirits; there is no contagion that spreads like that; I know sufficiently by experience what ’tis worth a yard. I love to discourse and dispute, but it is with but few men, and for myself; for to do it as a spectacle and entertainment to great persons, and to make of a man’s wit and words competitive parade is, in my opinion, very unbecoming a man of honor.

Folly is a bad quality; but not to be able to endure it, to fret and vex at it, as I do, is another sort of disease little less troublesome than folly itself; and is the thing that I will now accuse in myself. I enter into conference, and dispute with great liberty and facility, forasmuch as opinion meets in me with a soil very unfit for penetration, and wherein to take any deep root; no propositions astonish me, no belief offends me, though never so contrary to my own; there is no so frivolous and extravagant fancy that does not seem to me suitable to the production of human wit. We, who deprive our judgment of the right of determining, look indifferently upon the diverse opinions, and if we incline not our judgment to them, yet we easily give them the hearing. Where one scale is totally empty, I let the other waver under an old wife’s dreams; and I think myself excusable, if I prefer the odd number; Thursday rather than Friday; if I had rather be the twelfth or fourteenth than the thirteenth at table; if I had rather, on a journey, see a

hare run by me than cross my way, and rather give my man my left foot than my right, when he comes to put on my stockings. All such reveries as are in credit around us, deserve at least a hearing: for my part, they only with me import inanity, but they import that. Moreover, vulgar and casual opinions are something more than nothing in nature; and he who will not suffer himself to proceed so far, falls, peradventure, into the vice of obstinacy, to avoid that of superstition.

The contradictions of judgments, then, neither offend nor alter, they only rouse and exercise, me. We evade correction, whereas we ought to offer and present ourselves to it, especially when it appears in the form of conference, and not of authority. At every opposition, we do not consider whether or no it be just, but, right or wrong, how to disengage ourselves: instead of extending the arms, we thrust out our claws. I could suffer myself to be rudely handled by my friend, so much as to tell me that I am a fool, and talk I know not of what. I love stout expressions amongst gentlemen, and to have them speak as they think; we must fortify and harden our hearing against this tenderness of the ceremonious sound of words. I love a strong and manly familiarity and conversation: a friendship that pleases itself in the sharpness and vigor of its communication, like love in biting and scratching: it is not vigorous and generous enough, if it be not quarrelsome, if it be civilized and artificial, if it treads nicely and fears the shock:—

"Nor can people dispute without reprehension."

When anyone contradicts me, he raises my attention, not my anger; I advance towards him who controverts, who instructs me; the cause of truth ought to be the common cause both of the one and the other. What will the angry man answer? Passion has already confounded his judgment; agitation has usurped the place of reason. It were not amiss that the decision of our disputes should pass by wager: that there might be a material mark of our losses, to the end we might the better remember them; and that my man might tell me: "Your ignorance and obstinancy cost you last year, at several times, a hundred crowns." I hail and caress truth in what quarter soever I find it, and cheerfully surrender myself, and open my conquered arms as far off as I can discover it; and, provided it be not too imperiously, take a pleasure in being reproved, and accommodate myself to my accusers, very often more by reason of civility than amendment, loving to gratify and

nourish the liberty of admonition by my facility of submitting to it, and this even at my own expense.

Nevertheless, it is hard to bring the men of my time to it: they have not the courage to correct, because they have not the courage to suffer themselves to be corrected; and speak always with dissimulation in the presence of one another. I take so great a pleasure in being judged and known, that it is almost indifferent to me in which of the two forms I am so: my imagination so often contradicts and condemns itself, that 'tis all one to me if another do it, especially considering that I give his reprehension no greater authority than I choose; but I break with him, who carries himself so high, as I know of one who repents his advice, if not believed, and takes it for an affront if it be not immediately followed. That Socrates always received smilingly the contradictions offered to his arguments, a man may say arose from his strength of reason; and that, the advantage being certain to fall on his side, he accepted them as matter of new victory. But we see, on the contrary, that nothing in argument renders our sentiment so delicate, as the opinion of pre-eminence, and disdain of the adversary; and that, in reason, 'tis rather for the weaker to take in good part the oppositions that correct him and set him right. In earnest, I rather choose the company of those who ruffle me than of those who fear me; 'tis a dull and hurtful pleasure to have to do with people who admire us and approve of all we say. Antisthenes commanded his children never to take it kindly or for a favor, when any man commended them. I find I am much prouder of the victory I obtain over myself, when, in the very ardor of dispute, I make myself submit to my adversary's force of reason, than I am pleased with the victory I obtain over him through his weakness. In fine, I receive and admit of all manner of attacks that are direct, how weak soever; but I am too impatient of those that are made out of form. I care not what the subject is, the opinions are to me all one, and I am almost indifferent whether I get the better or the worse. I can peaceably argue a whole day together, if the argument be carried on with method; I do not so much require force and subtlety as order; I mean the order which we every day observe in the wranglings of shepherds and shop-boys, but never amongst us: if they start from their subject, 'tis out of incivility, and so 'tis with us; but their tumult and impatience never put them out of their theme; their argument still continues its course; if they interrupt, and do not stay for one another, they at least understand one another. Any one answers too well for me, if he

answers what I say: when the dispute is irregular and disordered, I leave the thing itself, and insist upon the form with anger and indiscretion; falling into a wilful, malicious, and imperious way of disputation, of which I am afterwards ashamed. 'Tis impossible to deal fairly with a fool: my judgment is not only corrupted under the hand of so impetuous a master, but my conscience also.

Our disputes ought to be interdicted and punished as well as other verbal crimes: what vice do they not raise and heap up, being always governed and commanded by passion? We first quarrel with their reasons, and then with the men. We only learn to dispute that we may contradict; and so, every one contradicting and being contradicted, it falls out that the fruit of disputation is to lose and annihilate truth. Therefore it is that Plato in his Republic prohibits this exercise to fools and ill-bred people. To what end do you go about to inquire of him, who knows nothing to the purpose? A man does no injury to the subject, when he leaves it to seek how he may treat it; I do not mean by an artificial and scholastic way, but by a natural one, with a sound understanding. What will it be in the end? One flies to the east, the other to the west; they lose the principle, dispersing it in the crowd of incidents: after an hour of tempest, they know not what they seek: one is low, the other high, and a third wide. One catches at a word and a simile; another is no longer sensible of what is said in opposition to him, and thinks only of going on at his own rate, not of answering you: another, finding himself too weak to make good his rest, fears all, refuses all, at the very beginning, confounds the subject; or, in the very height of the dispute, stops short and is silent, by a peevish ignorance affecting a proud contempt or a foolishly modest avoidance of further debate: provided this man strikes, he cares not how much he lays himself open; the other counts his words and weighs them for reasons; another only brawls and uses the advantage of his lungs. Here's one who learnedly concludes against himself, and another, who deafens you with prefaces and senseless digressions: another falls into downright railing, and seeks a quarrel after the German fashion, to disengage himself from a wit that presses too hard upon him: and a last man sees nothing into the reason of the thing, but draws a line of circumvallation about you of dialectic clauses, and the formulas of his art.

Now, who would not enter into distrust of sciences, and doubt whether he can reap from them any solid fruit for the service of life, considering the use we put them to?—

"Letters which cure nothing."

Who has got understanding by his logic? Where are all her fair promises?—

"It neither makes a man live better nor talk better."

Is there more noise or confusion in the scolding of herring-wives than in the public disputes of men of this profession? I had rather my son should learn in a tan-house to speak, than in the schools to prate. Take a master of arts, and confer with him: why does he not make us sensible of this artificial excellence? and why does he not captivate women and ignoramuses, as we are, with admiration at the steadiness of his reasons and the beauty of his order? why does he not sway and persuade us to what he will? why does a man, who has so much advantage in matter and treatment, mix railing, indiscretion, and fury in his disputations? Strip him of his gown, his hood, and his Latin, let him not batter our ears with Aristotle, pure and simple, you will take him for one of us, or worse. Whilst they torment us with this complication and confusion of words, it fares with them, methinks, as with jugglers; their dexterity imposes upon our senses, but does not at all work upon our belief: this legerdemain excepted, they perform nothing that is not very ordinary and mean: for being the more learned, they are none the less fools. I love and honor knowledge as much as they that have it, and in its true use 'tis the most noble and the greatest acquisition of men; but in such as I speak of (and the number of them is infinite), who build their fundamental sufficiency and value upon it, who appeal from their understanding to their memory:—

"Sheltering under the shadow of others,"

and who can do nothing but by book, I hate it, if I dare to say so, worse than stupidity. In my country, and in my time, learning improves fortunes enough, but not minds; if it meet with those that are dull and heavy, it overcharges and suffocates them, leaving them a crude and undigested mass; if airy and fine, it purifies, clarifies, and subtilizes them, even to exinanition. 'Tis a thing of almost indifferent quality; a very useful accession to a well-born soul, but hurtful and pernicious to others; or rather a thing of very precious use, that will not suffer itself to be purchased at an under rate; in the hand of some 'tis a sceptre, in that of others a fool's bauble.

But let us proceed. What greater victory do you expect than to make your enemy see and know that he is not able to encounter you? When you

get the better of your argument, ’tis truth that wins; when you get the advantage of form and method, ’tis then you who win. I am of opinion that in Plato and Xenophon Socrates disputes more in favor of the disputants than in favor of the dispute, and more to instruct Euthydemus and Protagoras in the knowledge of their impertinence, than in the impertinence of their art. He takes hold of the first subject like one who has a more profitable end than to explain it—namely, to clear the understandings that he takes upon him to instruct and exercise. To hunt after truth is properly our business, and we are inexcusable if we carry on the chase impertinently and ill; to fail of seizing it is another thing, for we are born to inquire after truth: it belongs to a greater power to possess it. It is not, as Democritus said, hid in the bottom of the deeps, but rather elevated to an infinite height in the divine knowledge. The world is but a school of inquisition: it is not who shall enter the ring, but who shall run the best courses. He may as well play the fool who speaks true, as he who speaks false, for we are upon the manner, not the matter, of speaking. ’Tis my humor as much to regard the form as the substance, and the advocate as much as the cause, as Alcibiades ordered we should: and every day pass away my time in reading authors without any consideration of their learning; their manner is what I look after, not their subject. And just so do I hunt after the conversation of any eminent wit, not that he may teach me, but that I may know him, and that knowing him, if I think him worthy of imitation, I may imitate him. Every man may speak truly, but to speak methodically, prudently, and fully, is a talent that few men have. The falsity that proceeds from ignorance does not offend me, but the foppery of it. I have broken off several treaties that would have been of advantage to me, by reason of the impertinent contestations of those with whom I treated. I am not moved once in a year at the faults of those over whom I have authority, but upon the account of the ridiculous obstinacy of their allegations, denials, excuses, we are every day going together by the ears; they neither understand what is said, nor why, and answer accordingly; ’tis enough to drive a man mad. I never feel any hurt upon my head but when ’tis knocked against another, and more easily forgive the vices of my servants than their boldness, importunity, and folly; let them do less, provided they understand what they do: you live in hope to warm their affection to your service, but there is nothing to be had or to be expected from a stock.

But what, if I take things otherwise than they are? Perhaps I do; and therefore it is that I accuse my own impatience, and hold, in the first place, that it is equally vicious both in him that is in the right, and in him that is in the wrong; for 'tis always a tyrannic sourness not to endure a form contrary to one's own: and, besides, there cannot, in truth, be a greater, more constant, nor more irregular folly than to be moved and angry at the follies of the world, for it principally makes us quarrel with ourselves; and the old philosopher never wanted occasion for his tears whilst he considered himself. Miso, one of the seven sages, of a Timonian and Democritic humor, being asked, "what he laughed at, being alone?" "That I do laugh alone," answered he. How many ridiculous things, in my own opinion, do I say and answer every day that comes over my head? and then how many more, according to the opinion of others? If I bite my own lips, what ought others to do? In fine, we must live amongst the living, and let the river run under the bridge without our care, or, at least, without our interference. In truth, why do we meet a man with a hunch-back, or any other deformity, without being moved, and cannot endure the encounter of a deformed mind without being angry? this vicious sourness sticks more to the judge than to the crime. Let us always have this saying of Plato in our mouths: "Do not I think things unsound, because I am not sound in myself? Am I not myself in fault? may not my observations reflect upon myself?"—a wise and divine saying, that lashes the most universal and common error of mankind. Not only the reproaches that we throw in the face of one another, but our reasons also, our arguments and controversies, are reboundable upon us, and we wound ourselves with our own weapons: of which antiquity has left me enough grave examples. It was ingeniously and home-said by him, who was the inventor of this sentence:—

"To every man his own excrements smell well."

We see nothing behind us; we mock ourselves a hundred times a day, when we deride our neighbors; and we detest in others the defects which are more manifest in us, and which we admire with marvellous inadvertency and impudence. It was but yesterday that I heard a man of understanding and of good rank, as pleasantly as justly scoffing at the folly of another, who did nothing but torment everybody with the catalogue of his genealogy and alliances, above half of them false (for they are most apt to fall into such ridiculous discourses, whose qualities are most dubious and least sure), and yet, would he have looked into himself, he would have discerned

himself to be no less intemperate and wearisome in extolling his wife's pedigree. O importunate presumption, with which the wife sees herself armed by the hands of her own husband? Did he understand Latin, we should say to him:—

"Come! if of himself he is not mad enough, urge him on."

I do not say that no man should accuse another, who is not clean himself,—for then no one would ever accuse,—clean from the same sort of spot; but I mean that our judgment, falling upon another who is then in question, should not, at the same time, spare ourselves, but sentence us with an inward and severe authority. 'Tis an office of charity, that he who cannot reclaim himself from a vice, should, nevertheless, endeavor to remove it from another, in whom, peradventure, it may not have so deep and so malignant a root; neither do I think it an answer to the purpose to tell him who reproves me for my fault that he himself is guilty of the same. What of that? The reproof is, notwithstanding, true and of very good use. Had we a good nose, our own ordure would stink worse to us, forasmuch as it is our own: and Socrates is of opinion that whoever should find himself, his son, and a stranger guilty of any violence and wrong, ought to begin with himself, present himself first to the sentence of justice, and implore, to purge himself, the assistance of the hand of the executioner; in the next place, he should proceed to his son, and lastly, to the stranger. If this precept seem too severe, he ought at least to present himself the first, to the punishment of his own conscience.

The senses are our first and proper judges, which perceive not things but by external accidents; and 'tis no wonder, if in all the parts of the service of our society, there is so perpetual and universal a mixture of ceremonies and superficial appearances; insomuch that the best and most effectual part of our polities therein consist. 'Tis still man with whom we have to do, of whom the condition is wonderfully corporal. Let those who, of these late years, would erect for us such contemplative and immaterial an exercise of religion, not wonder if there be some who think it had vanished and melted through their fingers, had it not more upheld itself amongst us as a mark, title, and instrument of division and faction, than by itself. As in conference, the gravity, robe, and fortune of him who speaks, ofttimes gives reputation to vain arguments and idle words, it is not to be presumed but that a man, so attended and feared, has not in him more than ordinary sufficiency; and that he to whom the king has given so many offices and

commissions and charges, he so supercilious and proud, has not a great deal more in him, than another who salutes him at so great a distance, and who has no employment at all. Not only the words, but the grimaces also of these people, are considered and put into the account; every one making it his business to give them some fine and solid interpretation. If they stoop to the common conference, and that you offer anything but approbation and reverence, they then knock you down with the authority of their experience: they have heard, they have seen, they have done so and so: you are crushed with examples. I should willingly tell them, that the fruit of a surgeon's experience, is not the history of his practice, and his remembering that he has cured four people of the plague and three of the gout, unless he knows how thence to extract something whereon to form his judgment, and to make us sensible that he has thence become more skilful in his art. As in a concert of instruments, we do not hear a lute, a harpsichord, or a flute alone, but one entire harmony, the result of all together. If travel and offices have improved them, 'tis a product of their understanding to make it appear. 'Tis not enough to reckon experiences, they must weigh and sort them, digest and distil them, to extract the reasons and conclusions they carry along with them. There were never so many historians: it is, indeed, good and of use to read them, for they furnish us everywhere with excellent and laudable instructions from the magazine of their memory, which, doubtless, is of great concern to the help of life; but 'tis not that we seek for now: we examine whether these relators and collectors of things are commendable themselves.

I hate all sorts of tyranny, both in word and deed. I am very ready to oppose myself against those vain circumstances that delude our judgments by the senses; and keeping [Editor: missing word] [Editor: missing word] [Editor: missing word] upon those extraordinary greatnesses, I find that at best they are men, as others are:—

"For in that fortune common sense is generally rare."

Peradventure, we esteem and look upon them for less than they are, by reason they undertake more, and more expose themselves; they do not answer to the charge they have undertaken. There must be more vigor and strength in the bearer than in the burden; he who has not lifted as much as he can, leaves you to guess that he has still a strength beyond that, and that he has not been tried to the utmost of what he is able to do; he who sinks under his load, makes a discovery of his best, and the weakness of his

shoulders. This is the reason that we see so many silly souls amongst the learned, and more than those of the better sort: they would have made good husbandmen, good merchants, and good artisans: their natural vigor was cut out to that proportion. Knowledge is a thing of great weight, they faint under it: their understanding has neither vigor nor dexterity enough to set forth and distribute, to employ or make use of this rich and powerful matter; it has no prevailing virtue but in a strong nature; and such natures are very rare—and the weak ones, says Socrates, corrupt the dignity of philosophy in the handling; it appears useless and vicious, when lodged in an ill-contrived mind. They spoil and make fools of themselves:—

> *"Just like an ape, simulator of the human face, whom a wanton boy has dizened up in rich silks above, but left the lower parts bare, for a laughing-stock for the tables."*

Neither is it enough for those who govern and command us, and have all the world in their hands, to have a common understanding, and to be able to do the same that we can; they are very much below us, if they be not infinitely above us: as they promise more, so they are to perform more.

And yet silence is to them, not only a countenance of respect and gravity, but very often of good advantage too: for Megabyzus, going to see Apelles in his painting-room, stood a great while without speaking a word, and at last began to talk of his paintings, for which he received this rude reproof: "Whilst thou wast silent, thou seemedst to be some great thing, by reason of thy chains and rich habit; but now that we have heard thee speak, there is not the meanest boy in my workshop that does not despise thee." Those princely ornaments, that mighty state, did not permit him to be ignorant with a common ignorance, and to speak impertinently of painting; he ought to have kept this external and presumptive knowledge by silence. To how many foolish fellows of my time have a sullen and silent mien procured the credit of prudence and capacity!

Dignities and offices are of necessity conferred more by fortune than upon the account of merit; and we are often to blame, to condemn kings when these are misplaced: on the contrary, 'tis a wonder they should have so good luck, where there is so little skill:—

> *"'Tis the chief virtue of a prince to know his people;"*

for nature has not given them a sight that can extend to so many people, to discern which excels the rest, nor to penetrate into our bosoms, where the knowledge of our wills and best value lies: they must choose us

by conjecture and by groping; by the family, wealth, learning, and the voice of the people, which are all very feeble arguments. Whoever could find out a way by which they might judge by justice, and choose men by reason, would, in this one thing, establish a perfect form of government.

"Ay, but he brought that great affair to a very good pass." This is, indeed, to say something, but not to say enough: for this sentence is justly received, "That we are not to judge of counsels by events." The Carthaginians punished the ill counsels of their captains, though they were rectified by a successful issue; and the Roman people often denied a triumph for great and very advantageous victories because the conduct of their general was not answerable to his good fortune. We ordinarily see, in the actions of the world, that Fortune, to show us her power in all things, and who takes a pride in abating our presumption, seeing she could not make fools wise, has made them fortunate in emulation of virtue; and most favors those operations the web of which is most purely her own; whence it is that we daily see the simplest amongst us bring to pass great business, both public and private; and, as Sisamnes, the Persian, answered those who wondered that his affairs succeeded so ill, considering that his deliberations were so wise, "that he was sole master of his designs, but that success was wholly in the power of fortune;" these may answer the same, but with a contrary turn. Most worldly affairs are performed by themselves:—

"The destinies find the way;"

the event often justifies a very foolish conduct; our interposition is little more than as it were a running on by rote, and more commonly a consideration of custom and example, than of reason. Being formerly astonished at the greatness of some affair, I have been made acquainted with their motives and address by those who had performed it, and have found nothing in it but very ordinary counsels; and the most common and usual are indeed, perhaps, the most sure and convenient for practice, if not for show. What if the plainest reasons are the best seated? the meanest, lowest, and most beaten more adapted to affairs? To maintain the authority of the counsels of kings, it needs not that profane persons should participate of them, or see further into them than the outmost barrier; he who will husband its reputation must be reverenced upon credit and taken altogether. My consultation somewhat rough-hews the matter, and considers it lightly by the first face it presents: the stress and main of the business I have been wont to refer to heaven:—

"Leave the rest to the gods."

Good and ill fortune are, in my opinion, two sovereign powers; 'tis folly to think that human prudence can play the part of Fortune; and vain is his attempt who presumes to comprehend both causes and consequences, and by the hand to conduct the progress of his design; and most especially vain in the deliberations of war. There was never greater circumspection and military prudence than sometimes is seen amongst us: can it be that men are afraid to lose themselves by the way, that they reserve themselves to the end of the game? I moreover affirm that our wisdom itself and consultation, for the most part commit themselves to the conduct of chance; my will and my reason are sometimes moved by one breath, and sometimes by another; and many of these movements there are that govern themselves without me: my reason has uncertain and casual agitations and impulsions: —

"The aspects of their minds change; and they conceive now such ideas, now such, just so long as the wind agitated the clouds."

Let a man but observe who are of greatest authority in cities, and who best do their own business; we shall find that they are commonly men of the least parts: women, children, and madmen have had the fortune to govern great kingdoms equally well with the wisest princes, and Thucydides says, that the stupid more ordinarily do it than those of better understandings; we attribute the effects of their good fortune to their prudence:—

"He makes his way who knows how to use Fortune, and thereupon we all call him wise;"

wherefore I say unreservedly, events are a very poor testimony of our worth and parts.

Now, I was upon this point, that there needs no more but to see a man promoted to dignity; though we knew him but three days before a man of little regard, yet an image of grandeur of sufficiency insensibly steals into our opinion, and we persuade ourselves that, being augmented in reputation and train, he is also increased in merit; we judge of him, not according to his worth, but as we do by counters, according to the prerogative of his place. If it happen so that he fall again, and be mixed with the common crowd, every one inquires with amazement into the cause of his having been raised so high. "Is this he, do they know? was he no wiser when he was there? Do princes satisfy themselves with so little? Truly, we were in good hands." This is a thing that I have often seen in my time. Nay, even

the very disguise of grandeur represented in our comedies in some sort moves and gulls us. That which I myself adore in kings is the crowd of their adorers; all reverence and submission are due to them, except that of the understanding: my reason is not obliged to bow and bend; my knees are. Melanthius being asked what he thought of the tragedy of Dionysius? "I could not see it," said he, "it was so clouded with language;" so most of those who judge of the discourses of great men ought to say, "I did not understand his words, they were so clouded with gravity, grandeur, and majesty." Antisthenes one day tried to persuade the Athenians to give order that their asses might be employed in tilling the ground as well as the horses were; to which it was answered that that animal was not destined for such a service: "That's all one," replied he, "you have only to order it: for the most ignorant and incapable men you employ in the commands of your wars incontinently become worthy enough, because you employ them;" to which the custom of so many people, who canonize the king they have chosen out of their own body, and are not content only to honor, but must adore them, comes very near. Those of Mexico, after the ceremonies of their king's coronation are over, dare no more look him in the face; but, as if they had deified him by his royalty. Amongst the oaths they make him take to maintain their religion, their laws, and liberties, to be valiant, just, and mild, he moreover swears to make the sun run his course in his wonted light, to drain the clouds at fit seasons, to make rivers run their course, and to cause the earth to bear all things necessary for his people.

I differ from this common fashion, and am more apt to suspect the capacity when I see it accompanied with that grandeur of fortune and public applause; we are to consider of what advantage it is to speak when a man pleases, to choose his subject, to interrupt or change it, with a magisterial authority; to protect himself from the oppositions of others by a nod, a smile, or silence, in the presence of an assembly that trembles with reverence and respect. A man of a prodigious fortune coming to give his judgment upon some slight dispute that was foolishly set on foot at his table, began in these words: "It can be no other but a liar or a fool that will say otherwise than so and so." Pursue this philosophical point with a dagger in your hand.

There is another observation I have made, from which I draw great advantage; which is, that in conferences and disputes, every word that seems to be good, is not immediately to be accepted. Most men are rich in

borrowed sufficiency: a man may very well say a good thing, give a good answer, cite a good sentence, without at all seeing the force of either the one or the other. That a man may not understand all he borrows, may perhaps be verified in myself. A man must not always presently yield, what truth or beauty soever may seem to be in the opposite argument; either he must stoutly meet it, or retire, under color of not understanding it, to try, on all parts, how it is lodged in the author. It may happen that we entangle ourselves, and help to strengthen the point itself. I have sometimes, in the necessity and heat of the combat, made answers that have gone through and through, beyond my expectation or hope; I only gave them in number, they were received in weight. As, when I contend with a vigorous man, I please myself with anticipating his conclusions, I ease him of the trouble of explaining himself, I strive to forestall his imagination whilst it is yet springing and imperfect; the order and pertinency of his understanding warn and threaten me afar off: I deal quite contrary with the others; I must understand, and presuppose nothing but by them. If they determine in general words, "this is good, that is naught," and that they happen to be in the right, see if it be not fortune that hits it off for them: let them a little circumscribe and limit their judgment; why, or how, it is so. These universal judgments that I see so common, signify nothing; these are men who salute a whole people in a crowd together; they, who have a real acquaintance, take notice of and salute them individually and by name. But 'tis a hazardous attempt; and from which I have, more than every day, seen it fall out, that weak understandings, having a mind to appear ingenious, in taking notice, as they read a book, of what is best and most to be admired, fix their admiration upon something so very ill chosen, that instead of making us discern the excellence of the author, they make us see their own ignorance. This exclamation is safe, "That is fine," after having heard a whole page of Virgil; by that the cunning sort save themselves; but to undertake to follow him line by line, and, with an expert and tried judgment, to observe where a good author excels himself, weighing the words, phrases, inventions, and his various excellences, one after another; keep aloof from that:—

> *"A man is not only to examine what every one says, but also what every one thinks, and from what reason every one thinks."*

I every day hear fools say things that are not foolish: they say a good thing; let us examine how far they understand it, whence they have it, and what they mean by it. We help them to make use of this fine expression, of

this fine sentence, which is none of theirs; they only have it in keeping; they have bolted it out at a venture; we place it for them in credit and esteem. You lend them your hand. To what purpose? they do not think themselves obliged to you for it, and become more inept still. Don't help them; let them alone; they will handle the matter like people who are afraid of burning their fingers; they dare change neither its seat nor light, nor break into it; shake it never so little, it slips through their fingers; they give it up, be it never so strong or fair: they are fine weapons, but ill hafted. How many times have I seen the experience of this? Now, if you come to explain anything to them, and to confirm them, they catch at it, and presently rob you of the advantage of your interpretation; "It was what I was about to say; it was just my idea; if I did not express it so, it was for want of language." Mere wind! Malice itself must be employed to correct this arrogant ignorance. The dogma of Hegesias, "that we are neither to hate nor accuse, but instruct," is correct elsewhere; but here 'tis injustice and inhumanity to relieve and set him right who stands in no need on't, and is the worse for't. I love to let them step deeper into the mire; and so deep, that, if it be possible, they may at last discern their error.

Folly and absurdity are not to be cured by bare admonition; and what Cyrus answered to him, who importuned him to harangue his army, upon the point of battle, "that men do not become warlike and valiant upon a sudden, by a fine oration, no more than a man becomes a good musician by hearing a fine song," may properly be said of such an admonition as this. These are apprenticeships that are to be served beforehand, by a long and continued education. We owe this care and this assiduity of correction and instruction to our own people; but to go preach to the first passer-by, and to become tutor to the ignorance and folly of the first we meet, is a thing that I abhor. I rarely do it, even in private conversation, and rather give up the whole thing than proceed to these initiatory and school instructions; my humor is unfit either to speak or write for beginners; but for things that are said in common discourse, or amongst other things, I never oppose them either by word or sign, how false or absurd soever.

As to the rest, nothing vexes me so much in folly as that it is more satisfied with itself than any reason can reasonably be. 'Tis unfortunate that prudence forbids us to satisfy and trust ourselves, and always dismisses us timorous and discontented; whereas obstinacy and temerity fill those who are possessed with them with joy and assurance. 'Tis for the most ignorant

to look at other men over the shoulder, always returning from the combat full of joy and triumph. And moreover, for the most part, this arrogance of speech and gaiety of countenance gives them the better of it in the opinion of the audience, which is commonly weak and incapable of well judging and discerning the real advantage. Obstinacy of opinion and heat in argument are the surest proofs of folly; is there anything so assured, resolute, disdainful, contemplative, serious, and grave as the ass?

May we not include under the title of conference and communication the quick and sharp repartees which mirth and familiarity introduce amongst friends, pleasantly and wittily jesting and rallying with one another? 'Tis an exercise for which my natural gaiety renders me fit enough, and which, if it be not so tense and serious as the other I spoke of but now, is, as Lycurgus thought, no less smart and ingenious, nor of less utility. For my part, I contribute to it more liberty than wit, and have therein more of luck than invention; but I am perfect in suffering, for I endure a retaliation that is not only tart, but indiscreet to boot, without being moved at all; and whoever attacks me, if I have not a brisk answer immediately ready, I do not study to pursue the point with a tedious and impertinent contest, bordering upon obstinacy, but let it pass, and hanging down cheerfully my ears, defer my revenge to another and better time: there is no merchant that always gains. Most men change their countenance and their voice where their wits fail, and by an unseasonable anger, instead of revenging themselves, accuse at once their own folly and impatience. In this jollity, we sometimes pinch the secret strings of our imperfections which, at another and graver time, we cannot touch without offence, and so profitably give one another a hint of our defects.

There are other jeux de main, rude and indiscreet, after the French manner, that I mortally hate; my skin is very tender and sensible: I have in my time seen two princes of the blood buried upon that very account 'Tis unhandsome to fight in play.

As to the rest, when I have a mind to judge of any one, I ask him how far he is contented with himself; to what degree his speaking or his work pleases him. I will none of these fine excuses, "I did it only in sport:—

"That work was taken from the anvil half finished."

I was not an hour about it: I have never looked at it since." Well, then, say I, lay these aside, and give me a perfect one, such as you would be measured by. And then, what do you think is the best thing in your work? is

it this part or that? is it grace or the matter, the invention, the judgment, or the learning? For I find that men are, commonly, as wide of the mark in judging of their own works, as of those of others; not only by reason of the kindness they have for them, but for want of capacity to know and distinguish them: the work, by its own force and fortune, may second the workman, and sometimes outstrip him, beyond his invention and knowledge. For my part, I judge of the value of other men's works more obscurely than of my own; and place the Essays, now high, now low, with great doubt and inconstancy. There are several books that are useful upon the account of their subjects, from which the author derives no praise; and good books, as well as good works, that shame the workman. I may write the manner of our feasts, and the fashion of our clothes, and may write them ill; I may publish the edicts of my time, and the letters of princes that pass from hand to hand; I may make an abridgment of a good book (and every abridgment of a good book is a foolish abridgment), which book shall come to be lost; and so on: posterity will derive a singular utility from such compositions: but what honor shall I have unless by great good fortune? Most part of the famous books are of this condition.

When I read Philip de Commines, doubtless a very good author, several years ago, I there took notice of this for no vulgar saying, "That a man must have a care not to do his master so great service, that at last he will not know how to give him his just reward;" but I ought to commend the invention, not him, because I met with it in Tacitus, not long since:—

> *"Benefits are so far acceptable as they appear to be capable of recompense; where they much exceed that point, hatred is returned instead of thanks;"*

and Seneca vigorously says:—

> *"For he who thinks it a shame not to requite, does not wish to have the man to whom he may make return:"*

Q. Cicero says with less directness:—

> *"Who thinks that he cannot satisfy, can by no means be a friend."*

The subject, according to what it is, may make a man looked upon as learned and of good memory; but to judge in him the parts that are most his own and the most worthy, the vigor and beauty of his soul, one must first know what is his own and what is not; and in that which is not his own, how much we are obliged to him for the choice, disposition, ornament, and language he has there presented us with. What if he has borrowed the matter

and spoiled the form, as it often falls out? We, who are little read in books, are in this strait, that when we meet with a high fancy in some new poet, or some strong argument in a preacher, we dare not, nevertheless, commend it till we have first informed ourselves, through some learned man, if it be the writer's own, or borrowed from some other; until that I always stand upon my guard.

I have lately been reading the history of Tacitus quite through, without interrupting it with anything else (which but seldom happens with me, it being twenty years since I have kept to any one book an hour together) and I did it at the instance of a gentleman for whom France has a great esteem, as well for his own particular worth, as upon the account of a constant form of capacity and virtue which runs through a great many brothers of them. I do not know any author in a public narrative who mixes so much consideration of manners and particular inclinations: and I am of a quite contrary opinion to him, holding that, having especially to follow the lives of the emperors of his time, so various and extreme in all sorts of forms, so many notable actions as their cruelty especially produced in their subjects, he had a stronger and more attractive matter to treat of than if he had had to describe battles and universal commotions; so that I often find him sterile, running over those brave deaths as if he feared to trouble us with their multitude and length. This form of history is by much the most useful; public movements depend most upon the conduct of fortune, private ones upon our own. 'Tis rather a judgment than a narration of history; there are in it more precepts than stories: it is not a book to read, 'tis a book to study and learn; 'tis full of sententious opinions, right or wrong; 'tis a nursery of ethic and politic discourses, for the use and ornament of those who have any place in the government of the world. He always argues by strong and solid reasons, after a pointed and subtle manner, according to the affected style of that age, which was so in love with an inflated manner, that where point and subtlety were wanting in things it supplied these with lofty and swelling words. 'Tis not much unlike the style of Seneca: I look upon Tacitus as more sinewy, and Seneca as more sharp. His pen seems most proper for a troubled and sick state, as ours at present is; you would often say that he paints and pinches us.

They who doubt his good faith sufficiently accuse themselves of being his enemy upon some other account. His opinions are sound, and lean to the right side in the Roman affairs. And yet I am angry at him for judging more

severely of Pompey than consists with the opinion of those worthy men who lived in the same time, and had dealings with him; and to have reputed him on a par with Marius and Sylla, excepting that he was more close. Other writers have not acquitted his intention in the government of affairs from ambition and revenge; and even his friends were afraid that victory would have transported him beyond the bounds of reason, but not to so immeasurable a degree as theirs; nothing in his life threatened such express cruelty and tyranny. Neither ought we to set suspicion against evidence; and therefore I do not believe Plutarch in this matter. That his narrations were genuine and straightforward may, perhaps, be argued from this very thing, that they do not always apply to the conclusions of his judgments, which he follows according to the bias he has taken, very often beyond the matter he presents us withal, which he has not deigned to alter in the least degree. He needs no excuse for having approved the religion of his time, according as the laws enjoined, and to have been ignorant of the true; this was his misfortune, not his fault.

I have principally considered his judgment, and am not very well satisfied therewith throughout; as these words in the letter that Tiberius, old and sick, sent to the senate. "What shall I write to you, sirs, or how should I write to you, or what should I not write to you at this time? May the gods and the goddesses lay a worse punishment upon me than I am every day tormented with, if I know!" I do not see why he should so positively apply them to a sharp remorse that tormented the conscience of Tiberius; at least, when I was in the same condition, I perceived no such thing.

And this also seemed to me a little mean in him that, having to say that he had borne an honorable office in Rome, he excuses himself that he does not say it out of ostentation; this seems, I say, mean for such a soul as his; for not to speak roundly of a man's self implies some want of courage; a man of solid and lofty judgment, who judges soundly and surely, makes use of his own example upon all occasions, as well as those of others; and gives evidence as freely of himself as of a third person. We are to pass by these common rules of civility, in favor of truth and liberty. I dare not only speak of myself, but to speak only of myself: when I write of anything else, I miss my way and wander from my subject. I am not so indiscreetly enamored of myself, so wholly mixed up with, and bound to myself, that I cannot distinguish and consider myself apart, as I do a neighbor or a tree: 'tis equally a fault not to discern how far a man's worth extends, and to say

more than a man discovers in himself. We owe more love to God than to ourselves, and know Him less, and yet speak of Him as much as we will.

If the writings of Tacitus indicate anything true of his qualities, he was a great personage, upright and bold, not of a superstitious but of a philosophical and generous virtue. One may think him bold in his relations; as where he tells us, that a soldier carrying a burden of wood, his hands were so frozen and so stuck to the load that they there remained closed and dead, being severed from his arms. I always in such things bow to the authority of so great witnesses.

What also he says, that Vespasian, by the favor of the god Serapis, cured a blind woman at Alexandria by anointing her eyes with his spittle, and I know not what other miracle, he says by the example and duty of all good historians. They record all events of importance; and amongst public incidents are the popular rumors and opinions. 'Tis their part to relate common beliefs, not to regulate them: that part concerns divines and philosophers, directors of consciences; and therefore it was that this companion of his, and a great man like himself, very wisely said:—

> *"Truly, I set down more things than I believe, for I can neither affirm things whereof I doubt, nor suppress what I have heard;"*

and this other:—

> *" 'Tis neither worth the while to affirm or to refute these things; we must stand to report."*

And writing in an age wherein the belief of prodigies began to decline, he says he would not, nevertheless, forbear to insert in his Annals, and to give a relation of things received by so many worthy men, and with so great reverence of antiquity; 'tis very well said. Let them deliver to us history, more as they receive it than as they believe it. I, who am monarch of the matter whereof I treat, and who am accountable to none, do not, nevertheless, always believe myself; I often hazard sallies of my own wit, wherein I very much suspect myself, and certain verbal quibbles, at which I shake my ears; but I let them go at a venture. I see that others get reputation by such things: 'tis not for me alone to judge. I present myself standing and lying, before and behind, my right side and my left, and in all my natural postures. Wits, though equal in force, are not always equal in taste and application.

This is what my memory presents to me in gross, and with uncertainty enough; all judgments in gross are weak and imperfect.

Table of Contents

Cover
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE
UPON SOME VERSES OF VIRGIL
OF COACHES
OF THE INCONVENIENCE OF GREATNESS
OF THE ART OF CONFERRING